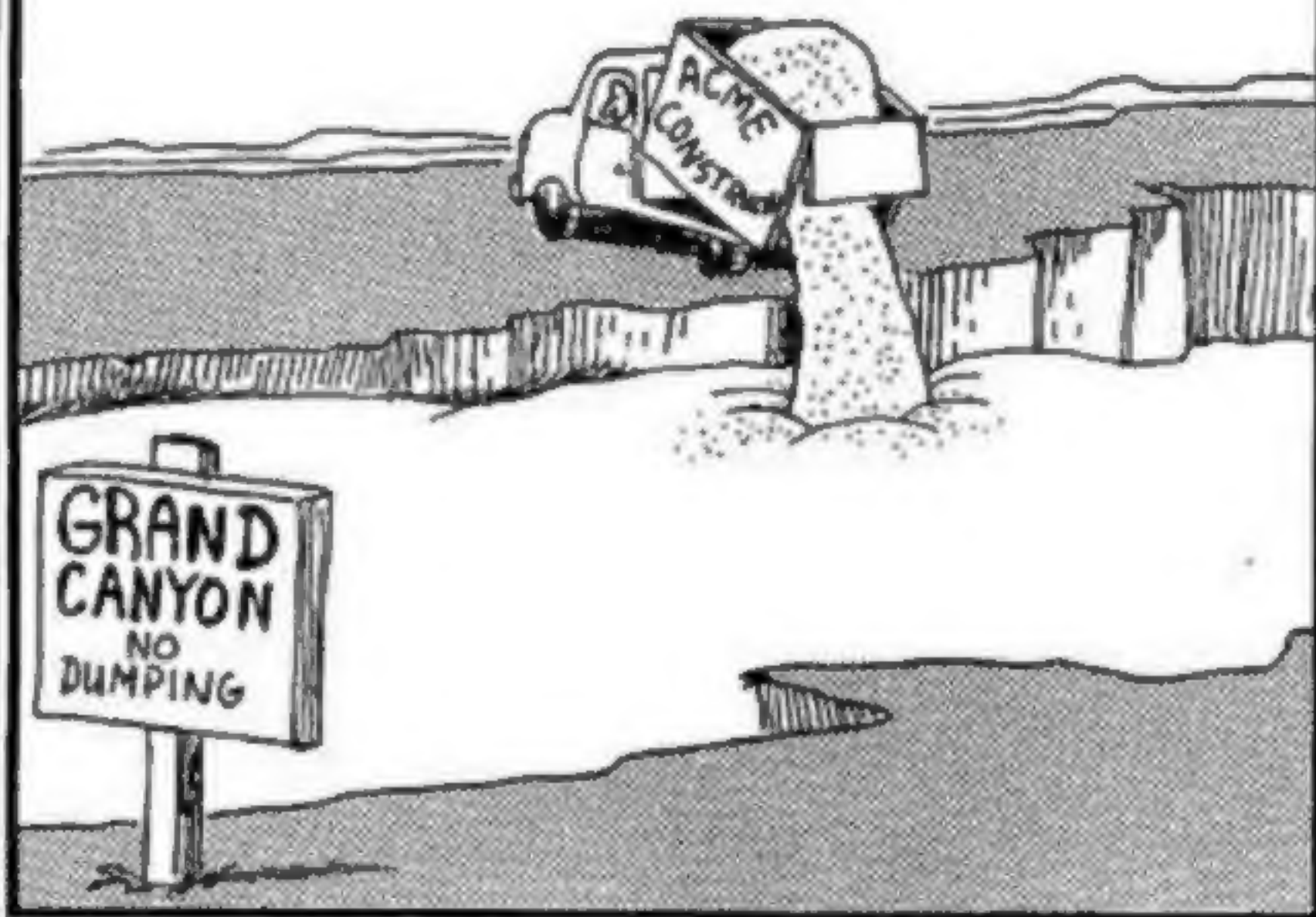




Unfortunately, Larry had always approached from the side that wasn't posted, and a natural phenomenon was destroyed before anyone could react.



I fear
this new
bayou is
fixing to
kill me.

So if by
accident we
brought part of
it here, that'd
be...



I knew it! You're a
plant! And you!
And you! You're all
in cahoots against
me EEE EEE



EEEE



SKWORCH

Bad.
That'd
be bad,
cher.

I'm sorry!
I should've
had examination
sex with
everyone!



Run!

I'm rooted here. Gwine go to seed.



Huh?

My spores will wither our guest. Let the *Bayou des Souhait's* grant one last wish.



BWOOF

twinkle

twinkle



ACHOO!



I'm sure this'd be touching if it didn't give me hay fever.

Ew, sludgy.



This is all that's left of the Cypress.

That Cypress. The one trying to kill us is doing fine.



We'd best keep moving.

Or stay here and take a stand.



I propose a series of traps, each more cunning than the last, to lure the monsters to —



It would've worked if I'd had three more hours and a lathe.

Why do people question my ideas of running and shooting?



Lt. Eris?
Mr. Peirson?
Hello?



The biomass has me
and it's spreading.
This may well be
how the end of the
world begins...



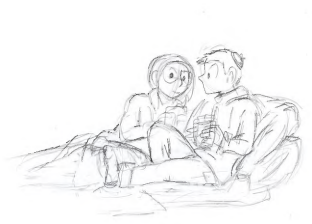
don't say things
can't get any worse
don't say things
can't get any worse
don't say



Dr. Wilkin!
I **thought** I
recognized
that whimper!

I
DIDN'T
SAY IT!





H.T.! I should've known you were behind this.

Please. We are now merely part of the collective.



I can't believe you'd subsume your ego into anything.

Your little group forced our paw.



You interfered in the Vermont elections! **You** stopped the recruitment effort in Alaska!



When everyone went reality blind, we brought you bagels. Those bagels were **stale**, you Machiavellis!



Working
openly with
Anasigma
now? Quelle
surprise.

I came
here to
help the
Cypress.

And
here
we
are.

The Cypress
is dead! You
cut her out
and hunted
her down!

We call
it a
severance
package.

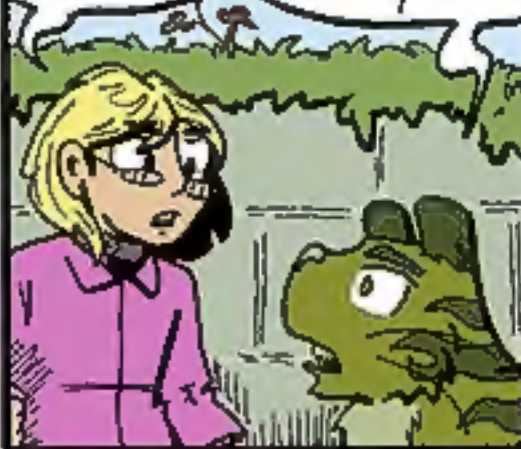
Are villain
puns your
contribution
to the
biomass?

That and
an overall
sense of
panache.

You're the
most stylish
member?
Maybe I
need to
assimilate.

Are you planning to assimilate me?

Surprisingly, we may have a use for you.



Anasigma is poised to eradicate nonhumans. We're forced to fight back.



We will crush the humans. Subjugate them. End their unjust reign over the earth.



And you need a psychologist because...?

We don't want them to complain. Can you whip up a puppet show?



You know I won't join you.

It's cute that you think your input matters.



You can't fight all humanity! You'll be destroyed!

This isn't the Old War.



Then we were unable to defend ourselves. This time, we'll have the superior position.



In a sewer, covered in algae?

These spores render us immune to sarcasm.



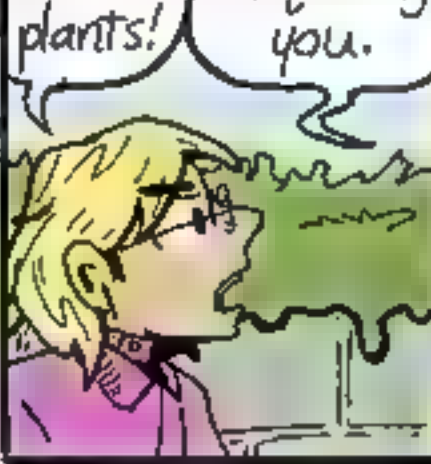
What about the other humans you assimilated?

We haven't absorbed your Anasigma friends.



I saw two people turn into plants!

Duplicates we created after tranquilizing you.



But why?

A test run. We're training doppelgangers to infiltrate human society.



And we just like to mess with you, Doctor.

You and every other species.



You're saying the people who got replaced are alive?

Not at all.



This entire zone is hostile to human life. It's unthinkable that any of those fools could survive—



Yow, a tiger! Grab a cappuchino and run!



What? There's a Dunkin' out by the strangling vine grove.

We keep meaning to annihilate it, but we like creme sticks.





Dr.
Taintor!
Run!

Oh, don't be
melodramatic.
We have no
immediate need
of him.



But you're both
welcome to sample
life in the
collective.



Once you experience
absorption, you'll
be begging for—



We **do** have
immediate
need of a
PR person.

I'm in.
What kind
of snacks
do you have?



Bad news,
Sweetheart!
Think of the
worst person
who could be
here.

Sparkle!
Knew she
was up to
something!

No,
but—

Tigerlily
Jones!

No—

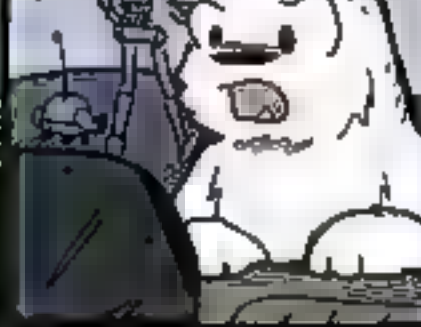
The
Transgenic
League!

No—

That sinister
mail lady!

You have
too many
grudges
going.

"Weird Al"
Yankovic?
Unity has
a theory.



H.T.? Just what we need: a **sarcastic** all-devouring entity.



I don't know where my teammates are or if they're alive.

Okay, we're coming to get you.



Keep an eye out for nothing. That'll be Nick.

I ain't going if his brains blow up.

I'll go!
I'll go!



I miss you guys.

No exploding brains, Unity.

Aw.



How do you plan to extract me?

We're working on it. I promise.



Until then, hang in there.

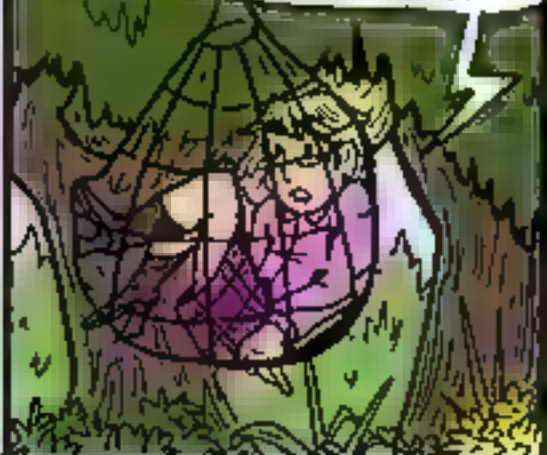


TWANG



Not a problem.

There'd better not be puns happening over there.



Halt!
Friend
or
foe?

Depends.
Who are
your friends?



I'll ask the
questions! Who
won the 1939
World
Series?

No idea.
Who?



I was
hoping
you
knew.

Does this
prove I'm
a friend
or a foe?



Wait,
start over.
I got
confused.

It proves
I'm still
patient after
a very long
weekend.



Name's Daphne.
I worked for
H.T.'s PAC.

Oh, right.

But he went off
the rails. I had
to flee and
go underground.

Turning
everyone
into plants
was too
much?

Exactly!
We were
supposed to
turn everyone
into **tigers**!

So sad
they
pivoted
on you.

I produced
reams of
fan art for
the new order!







You came
here to
work with
H.T.?

Don't worry,
I quit.
Never work
with cats.



What's
with
the...
ah...

The Cone of
Pride? H.T.
wanted to
stop me from
biting off my
symbiote fungus.



Can't
you take
it off
now?

No! I'm
reclaiming
the Cone as
a badge
of honor!



Can I
at least
glam it up
for you?

Bedazzling
would be
the greater
shame!



We stay here to help idiots like you who wander into the Zone.



We offer alternatives to H.T.'s cult.

Well, that shouldn't be a hard case to make—



Guess what, Tip?

The collective has **great** wifi!



The plants keep upping their game.

And look! Surprisingly cute brain parasites!



You can't seriously consider assimilation.

It's got its perks.



The collective's pool of knowledge is vast. I can do so much research!



And it's very calming to know what's going on everywhere. This could cure my paranoia!



I **do** like the floral bling.

It smells like French vanilla!

Join usss...



I see what's going on.

Oh?

SVU 824 20

A-Sig sends mad geniuses in, the biomass absorbs them. It **wants** your unstable intelligence.

If you stay, you're falling for their plan.

So I should go back to Anasigma and work for **them**?

Erm. Do you have a non-evil job offer?

You know, this vine is a caffeine drip.

Maybe the plant
collective isn't
all bad.

It is.

I could
steer it
in a
better
direction
...

You're
buying
into their
group—
think!

Don't give in! Stand
up for yourself!
Lick your own
butt!

That aphorism
doesn't translate
well, but I
get the
gist.

First
scratch
my ears.
I've got the
devil's own itch.



Why, good morning,
Doctor. Sleep well?

You again.

You know full well
I slept in the mud
in a ruin surrounded
by howling plant
beasts.

Not that I got
any sleep, agonizing
over this
crisis...

And yet
somehow you
managed to
change into
another outfit.

Someone
has to
remain
decent.

So what **do**
you think of
our little
enterprise?

May I
answer
honestly
?

Of course. I'll
honor your choice
to leave
or stay.

In that
case...

I see what you're
trying to do, but it's
ultimately driven by
your ego. I'll never
join you.

I'd honor
you **more**
if you
said "stay."

With my nails
in this
condition?



I'm a tiger
of my word.
Tip Wilkin
may leave.

Not sure
I like the
use of third
person.



By which I mean
a plant duplicate
of Tip Wilkin!



Eep!
I **love**
your
hair!

Just a twist!
What about
that kinky
beret?



It may have been unwise
to bring two of them
into the world.



A perfect
doppelganger

What is
this?



Our doppel-Tip will
return in your place
and infiltrate
Skin Horse.

Ha!



My teammates can't
be fooled! We have
a bond you'll never
understand!



Unity! Tell Nick to start
the rescue mission
for Tip!

Who?

Guy we worked with.
I want to say blond?



Don't worry, I'll avoid the face.

Going straight to violence? You really don't know me.



I know you drop your guard on your left!

You must **not** know I excel at close grappling.

SKG 8/20/20



Oof!



Is it wrong to enjoy this?

If it is, I don't want to be right.



You're just a surface copy of me.

So? Your friends are too dim to notice.



Anyhow, you're all surface.

Sometimes I get a little deeper.



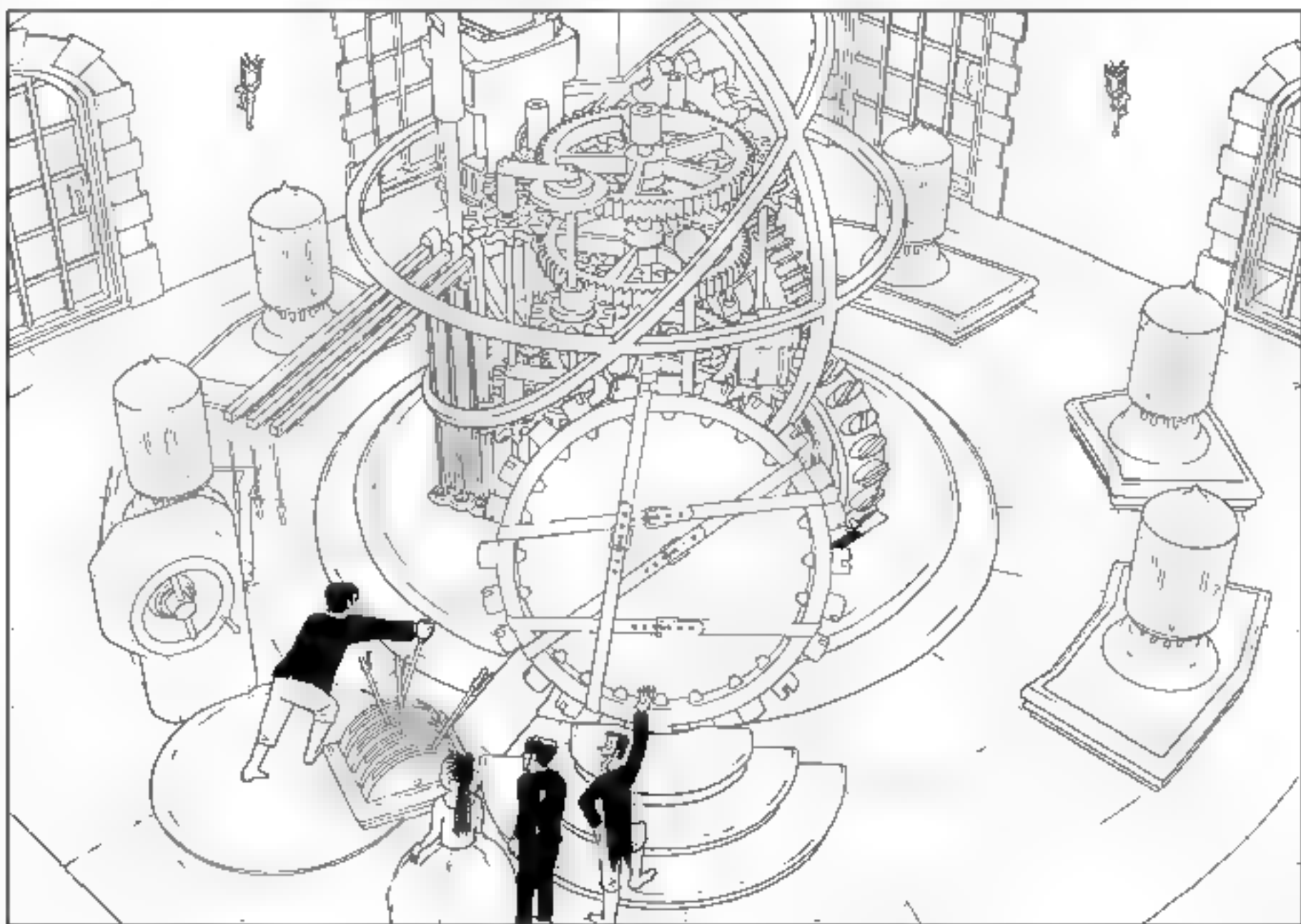
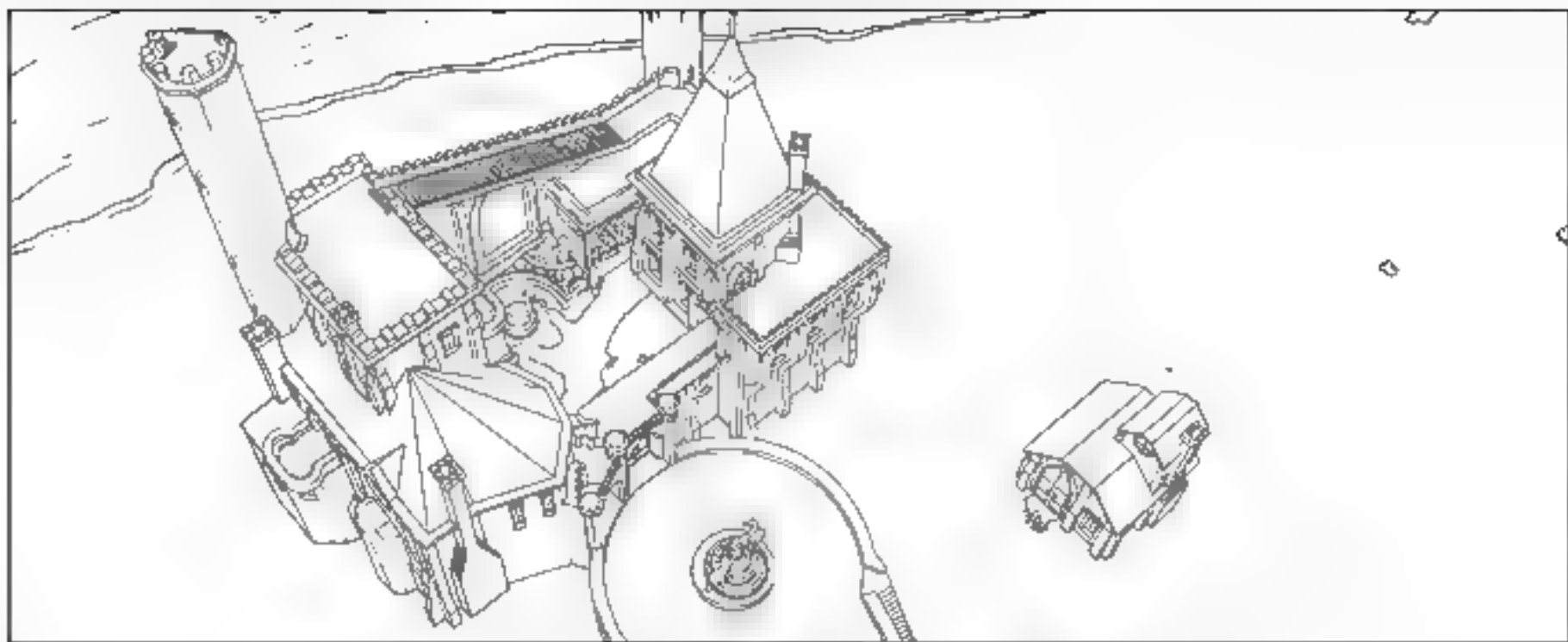
Like when somebody insults my friends.



That glare! Would you call it "incandescent" or "smoldering"?

Incandescent on the left, smoldering on the right.





I can
match you
move for
move.

I have
one
advantage
you don't.



No! I can guess
your thoughts!
It's too corny!



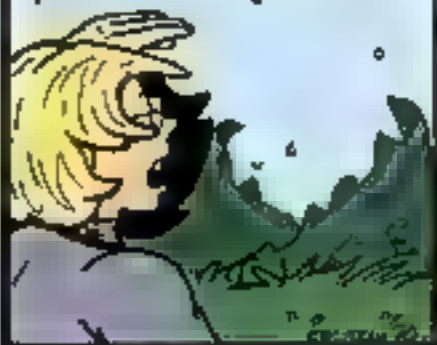
Fine. The
power
of
friendship.

I was going
to say "credit
at Sephora,"
but this works.



Nick?!
Where
are
you?

I'm invisible,
dumbass!
St. Charlie
stealth tech!



And we're
here to
observe the
test run!



On our
**invisible
flying
bicycles!**



I can see you
two. What's the
point of making
the **bicycles**
invisible?



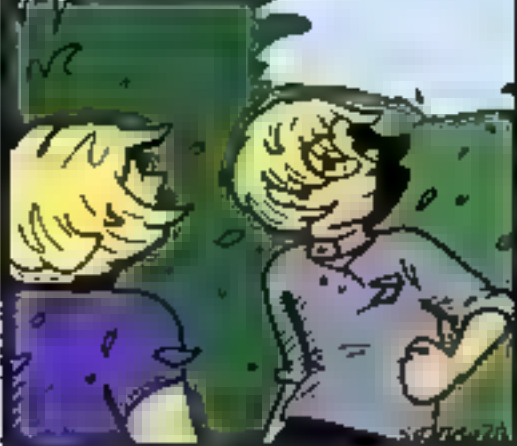
Thank
you.



You owe me
one cute
animal hat.



Two Wilkins?
Dafug? Which
one's the fake?



Argh! Botanical...
symbiotes...
blowing apart!



No way to tell!
I'll have to leave
them both behind!

NICK!



How did we
let two
hovering
imbeciles
through?

We were
caught up
in watching
the Tips
fight.



This is
a vast
hive-
mind!

And we
were **all**
watching
the Tips.



Get it together! How
can we conquer
anything if we're
so vulnerable to
bamboozlement?



Though the sweat on
their flushed brows
was hypnotic...

REWRITE!



You want this exploding collar off? Yes! Please! And hurry!



Fortunately, my invisible bike has a chainsaw attachment!



And **mine** has a flamethrower!



Why does reality bend for everything but the friggin' collar?



Er, gentlemen?
What's the
hold-up?

Give
us
time!

You're the
one who's
all picky
about not
exploding.

These
Anasigma
death traps
are fiendishly
brilliant!

Correct.
Thank you!

The sweater
undercuts
the cool
entrance
vibe.

It's grown
on me.
Plant pun
intended.





There.
Don't say
I never did
anything
for you.

Er...could
you have
done that
at any
time?

SNAP



No. Only when
I felt like it.
Now get out
while you can.

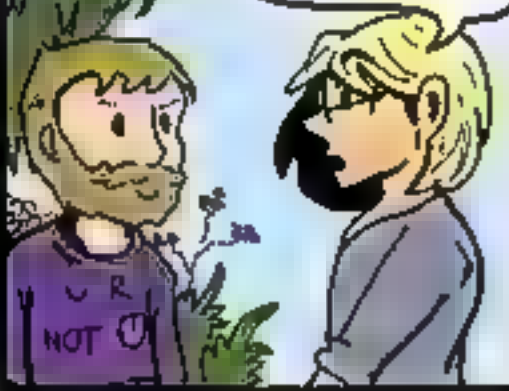


What about you?
You'll just stay
here and be
annoyed forever?



It's my
perfect
existence.

I hope I
contributed
in some small
way to your
crabbiness.



You can't see me,
but I'm prepped
to fly the hell
outta here. Who's
boarding?



I think
I'll
stay.

Me
too.

I still
have
work
here.



The airlift leaves
now! This may be
your last chance
to escape!



But our
first chance
to look up
your skirt
as you go.

That's it.
Whatever the
flying cussing
ghost thing
is, I'll take
it.



You won't leave
so easily! We'll
devour you!



I gotta
warn you,
I got's
guns.

And **we** have
info. You're
a pacifist.
You won't
kill us.



Yeah, so, question.
As a giant gestalt
thing, how much of
you can get shot
off before you
die?



That
was **not**
fair
play.

Aw man! He
shot enough
to make the
wifi go down!



I can't believe
I ever bought H.T.'s
bull pucky.



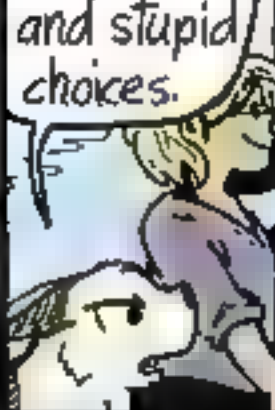
I'm sure the pack's
falling apart without
me, all because I
fell for that con
artist.



But now you're
riding an invisible
helicopter to a
robotic government
building!



In this
hellworld,
there are only
bad choices
and stupid
choices.



Not so!
I chose
to give my
invisible
bike a
cupholder!



Guess I can turn off the cloaking device.

fzzt Say, Nick. Where's your... human you?



Your mom.

Ha ha, very funny.



Yeah, kidding. I'm making out with Dr. Lee on your desk.

Fine, **don't** tell me.



Nick! Focus on the mission!

He can multitask!





www.rose.az.az.gov

www.rose.az.az.gov

So this is Sweetheart's base. Can't say I look forward to seeing her.



I was wrong about everything. She's going to be **So** superior.

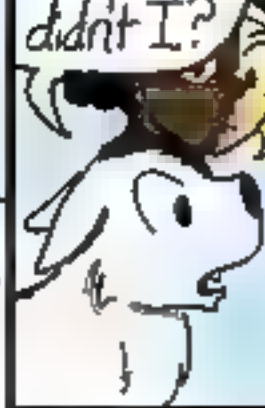


Tip! Look! We're the man who mistook his wife for a hat!



We're not married yet tho.

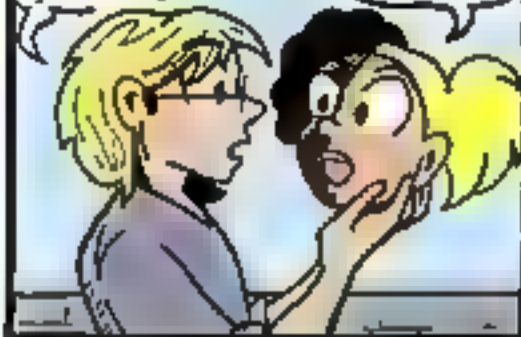
Crud. I missed a gloating opportunity, didn't I?



Yes, and it's the best welcome gift you could give me.



Unity?
You don't
have a
new body
yet?



We've been
focused on
Operation:
Tip Rescue,
fam!

Anyway, replacing
a whole entire
body is a major
project.



It's true. We
haven't been lucky
enough to get
a body.



Whereas **I've** been
lucky enough to
get h-



So what's your little club's plan to take out H.T.?

There isn't one.



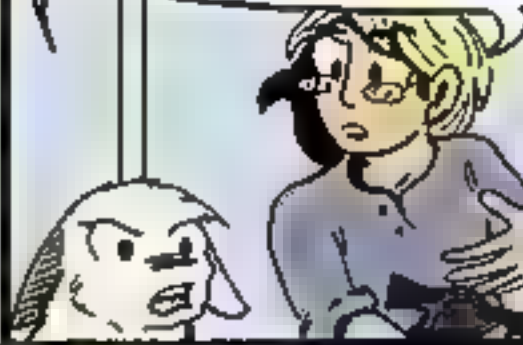
Even if we had the resources, What?! the biomass is more than H.T.



Our mandate is to help sapient's, not kill them.



I wanted carnage, dang it. And I wanted Louboutins that weren't full of swamp water, but here we are.



H.T.'s all over
nonhuman
social media
recruiting
folks.

"Join and be
part of
something
greater."
Shameless!

But
true.

Whose side
are you
on?

I don't like the gestalt,
but it offers a refuge.
If we want to stop
it, we need to offer
more.

Anyone for double-
pressed ~~paninis~~? Hitty
stepped on a Panera
Bread.

And we've got a
ways to go.

Even if the biomass isn't **trying** to kill people, it's had casualties!

I'm just saying we can't "take it out"!

Unfortunately, Tip's right. We don't want to create martyrs. We want to stop recruitment.

And how do we do **that**?

Deploy our crack oppo messaging team.

My blogger sense is tingling!

Sure it's not the can of expired Spaghetti-Os you ate?

We'll get your message out! We'll flood every channel!

What **is** the message?



The chance to fight the New War without sacrificing personhood. Respect for the uniqueness of every-



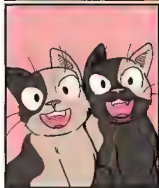
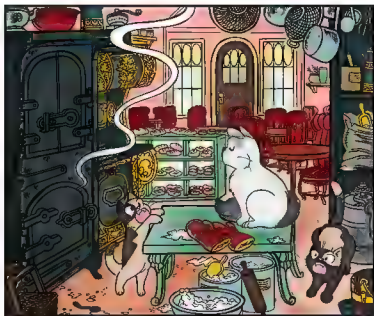
Er... We threw different what're those red brands of jam at the windows splotches to see which is stickiest.



The uniqueness of **almost** every member.

Crucial proof of the Illuminati-Smuckers conspiracy!





I don't know about recruiting an army.

This is war, Tip. We need to be ready.

SUPPLIES

Our people are lovers, not fighters. You haven't seen Row—

Um. I was looking for a squeegee.

Here.

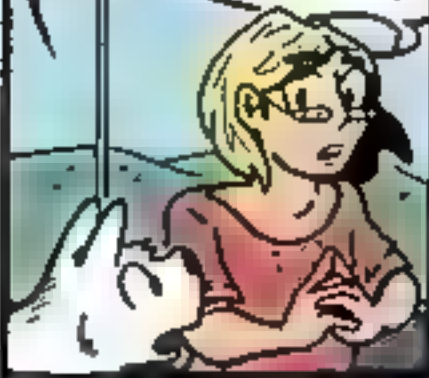
Please turn them into fighters.

How long was I away?

SPY

Before you get some rest, I have one more piece of news.

Oh? So do I.



That A-Sig base in Kansas? They've gone rogue and joined the resistance.

We got through to them! That's great!



But they'll need some form of defense. What's your news?

I have the seed of the Cypress!



I don't like the way these two items connect.

Have an open mind. **This** entity might only zombify **existing** corpses.



This will grow a... plant person?

A sapient ecosystem. She's called the Cypress.



I have to warn you. The Cypress was okay, but her offshoots can be unstable. I don't know how this seed will grow.



Oh, don't worry. We'll raise it with kindness and good break room etiquette!



Am I nuts for thinking this might work?

We made six dozen cakes for your omnivorous friend!



You've really gone rogue?

Yup! We threw the loyalists a goodbye potluck and locked them out.



Your visit inspired me to dig deeper into Anasigma's work. I didn't like what I saw.



We're still defending America. We just realized what the **real** threat is.



Well, all that cake going through Unity did **not** please HR.

Funny enough, it's not you.



Ah, Sweetheart.
I believe we ought
to discuss
Pavanne.

Your
daughter?

I met her once.
What's up?

I fear she may
be coming to
help us.

So?

We may not
like the
help she has
to give.

"We"
meaning
"present
company"?

Meaning "Earth
as a whole."
Do you think
Kansas has
tea?

H.T.'s influence is spreading... A-Sig has bases everywhere... and Pavanne is a big question mark.



Somehow I have to prepare us for all of it.

But at least you get to look at me again!



snort
hee hee
hee
hee
hee



Thank you, Tip.

Oh, well, as long as I'm helping.



Small Press Comics Expo at



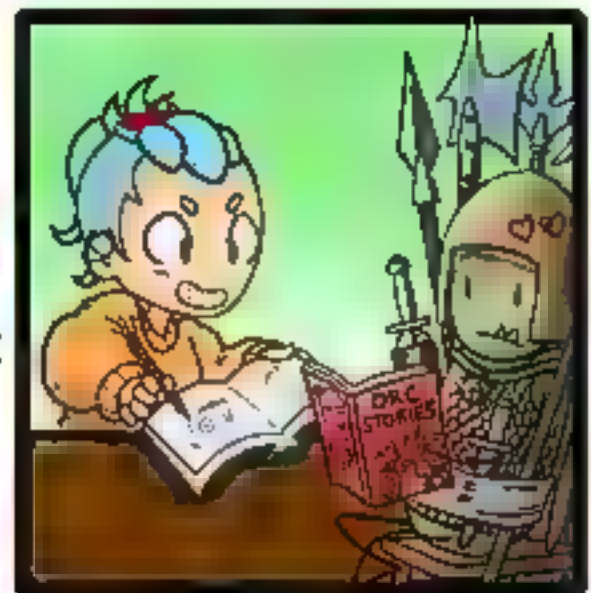
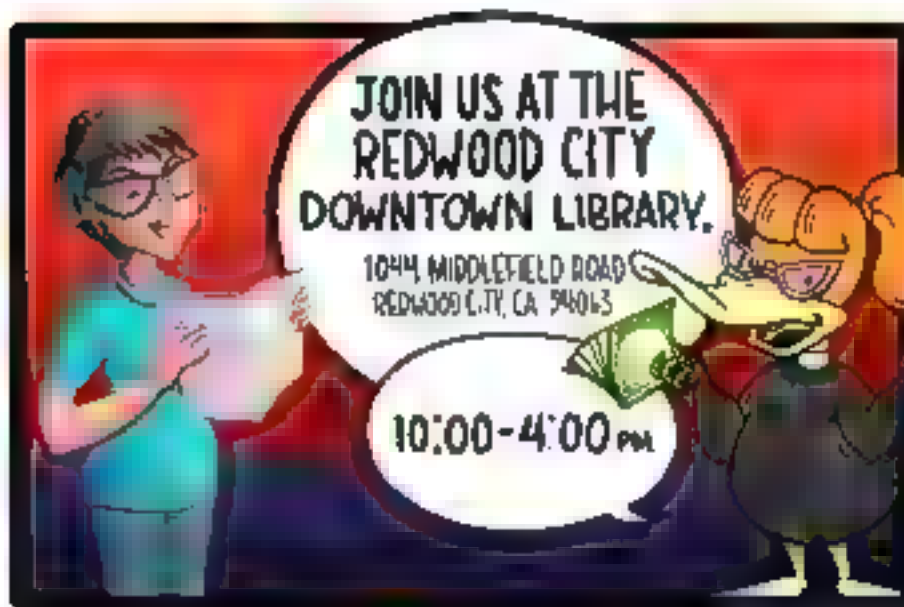
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Any idea how this recruitment scheme will play out?

I see a host of Sasquatch descending astride a mighty dragon.



Wow, Jonah, your second sight is getting weird.

No, they're right over there.



First sight's getting weird too.

You wanted us to go into journalism.



Is this Marion, Kansas?
We Sasquatches seek
a safe haven.

You saw
our post?



Of course! It's
trending like mad!

Sasquatches use
the Internet?



My girl,
we **invented**
the Internet!

I
thought
it was a
DARPA
thing.



And who do you think
runs DARPA?

...so much new
content...



We stand with you.
The Sasquatches are
a peaceful people.

Hear, hear!



And I, Kay, declare
you have the loyalty
of the dragons!



Okay, there's
only one of
me, but I'm
very big.

Bigfoots
are peaceful?
Major
disappointment.



You really think you can
get a bunch of
different
sapient's to
coexist?

We've already
done it.



Kansas is a new
experiment, but here
at Annex One we've
developed a system
that works.



Unity
keeps
napping
in my
hatboxes!



They smell nice!
And who has
hatboxes, plu-

TIME OUTS
FOR YOU BOTH!



Everyone
obeys
you?

Don't knock
it 'til
you've
tried it.

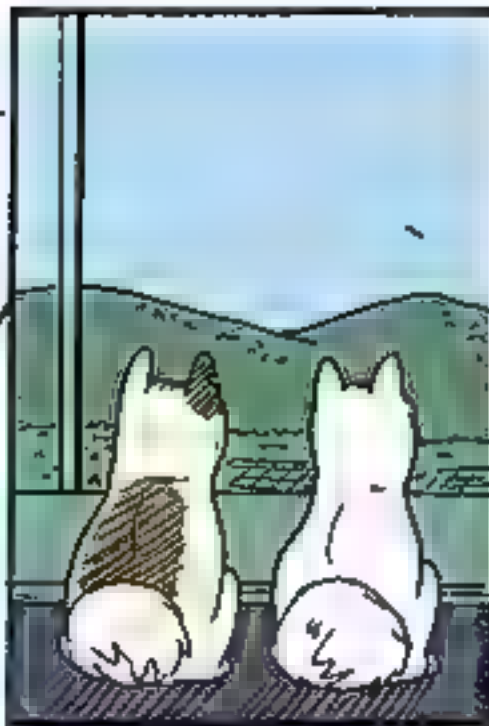


You're free
to stay
as long as
you need,
Sparkle.

Might be a
while before
the pack
takes me back.



You know, we were
created to conquer
America, but this
is the first time
I've **seen** it.



Kind
of
meh.

Yeah, but
they've got
a **ton** of
junk food.



Sir, word from
Carbondale
is that
diplomacy
has failed.

Well.
It was
always
a long
shot.

Captain Wilkin has
escaped, probably to
Kansas. Should we
strike?

Not
there.

Dr. Engelbright, you
run Skin Horse now.
What's your mandate?

To work with
vulnerable sapients.

Good.
Find me
the **most**
vulnerable.

All right!
Time to
save America
again!



LOOK! It's the SKIN HORSE MAILBAG!

Submitted
by our
generous
Patreon
supporters!



Other Jeff writes: "Seeing some faces from St. Charlie makes me wonder how the two guard dogs are doing now. You know, the ones based on my dogs?"



This comes to us from Jeffrey Wikstrom, who also contributed to a Kickstarter at the we-draw-you-in-the-strip level.



"The oversized Airedale is no longer with us, and the tricolor collie is blind and elderly these days—"



Aw, Jeff.



puppers...



Jeff, c'mon. You can decide their cartoon fates, okay?

Yeah?

Sure.



In that case, I will not let my condolences stand in the way of putting dogs in hats.



A while back, St. Charlie had a cultural identity crisis that briefly turned it into the setting for a Teen Post-Apocalyptic Novel.*



*As told in Jeff's 2015 Kickstarter bonus story, "Polymath," natch!

During that time, I posit that its core systems were maintained by dogs while everyone else was distracted.



The Airedale would be in the engine, wearing a smart engineer's cap.



I'd put the collie in the caboose,* dressed as a rail conductor.



*Jeff knows it's a subway train. Jeff doesn't care.

So that's my answer. One at the very front of the train, one at the very rear, both working to keep the train running while the humans work out their silly crisis.



And yes, they'll miss each other, but once the tribulation is over, it is my belief that they **will** be reunited.



Feel better?

Slightly.



I'm not good at this stuff. I have a cat.



There's
a real
community
growing
in Kansas.

Perhaps
we should
stay here
as well.



We could stand to
"put down roots."

HITTY LONG
FOR PEACE
+ QUIET.



Ma'am! Emergency
call from Florida!



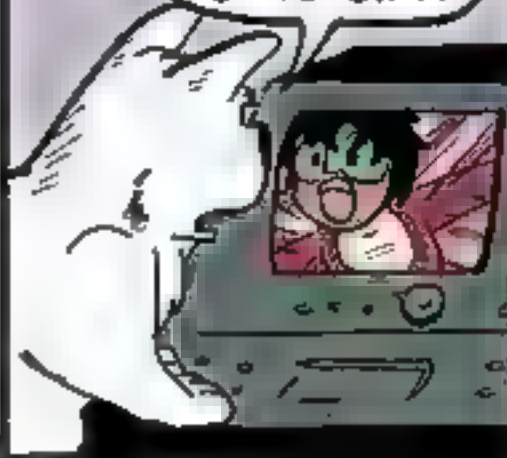
CAULK UP THE WINDOWS!
HITTY IS TAKING
US SWIMMING!

This will be Murder:
on my daily collection.



ANNEX ONE! WE
REQUIRE ASSISTANCE!

What is it,
Goose Girl?



WE'D LIKE HELP
TRANSPORTING
THESE ZOMBIES
BACK TO FLORIDA!



That's not much
of an emergency.

IT'S NOT AN
EMERGENCY!
WHY WOULD ANYONE
THINK THAT?!



No idea.
Where's
the rest
of your
team?

BUYING
EARPLUGS
AND ASPIRIN!
DON'T KNOW WHY!
AAAAAAA



Is it safe for the Key West zombies to go home? A-Sig still has that weather machine.

Aha!



I haven't forgotten how Mr. Green used my weather device to bend nature to his whim.



So I designed the zombies a weather device **neutralizer** to bend nature to **their** whim.



Nope. Not safe.

Bend it back, I mean. Probably.



It's settled.
We'll head to
Florida for
the zombie
re-re-location.

Perfect!
A field
mission,
like old
times.



Yes! Time to stock
up on body parts!

Can I go with?

You gotta, babe.



Welp, Wilkin, guess
it's just you and
KIDDING I'mo go
watch my girlfriend
try on swimsuits.



Maybe
not
exactly
like old
times.

Y'hear where
I said
"girlfriend"?
I got a
girlfriend!



I feel like
the rest of
the team is
leaving me
behind.

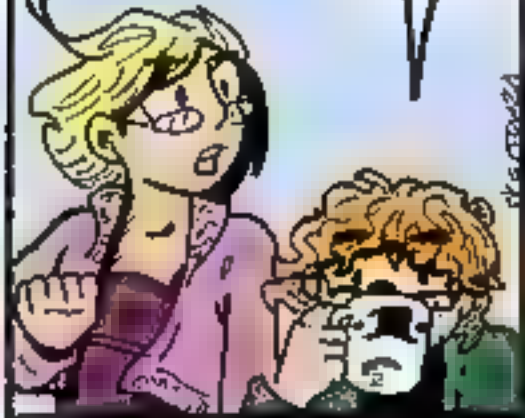
You
want
serious
advice?

You keep "working"
on yourself, but it's
always about you.
It's always your
way of thinking.

You're
right,
Marcie.
Just saying,
if you want
change, it
has to be
real change.

I need a
makeover
of the
soul.

Or,
okay,
baby
steps.



Nick, you
cleaned!

It...
smells
good.

Afft. Don't
gunk it up
with dog hair
and zombie
neck stuff.



Omigosh, scented
candles! Did
Dr. Lee leave
them here?

No, them's mine.



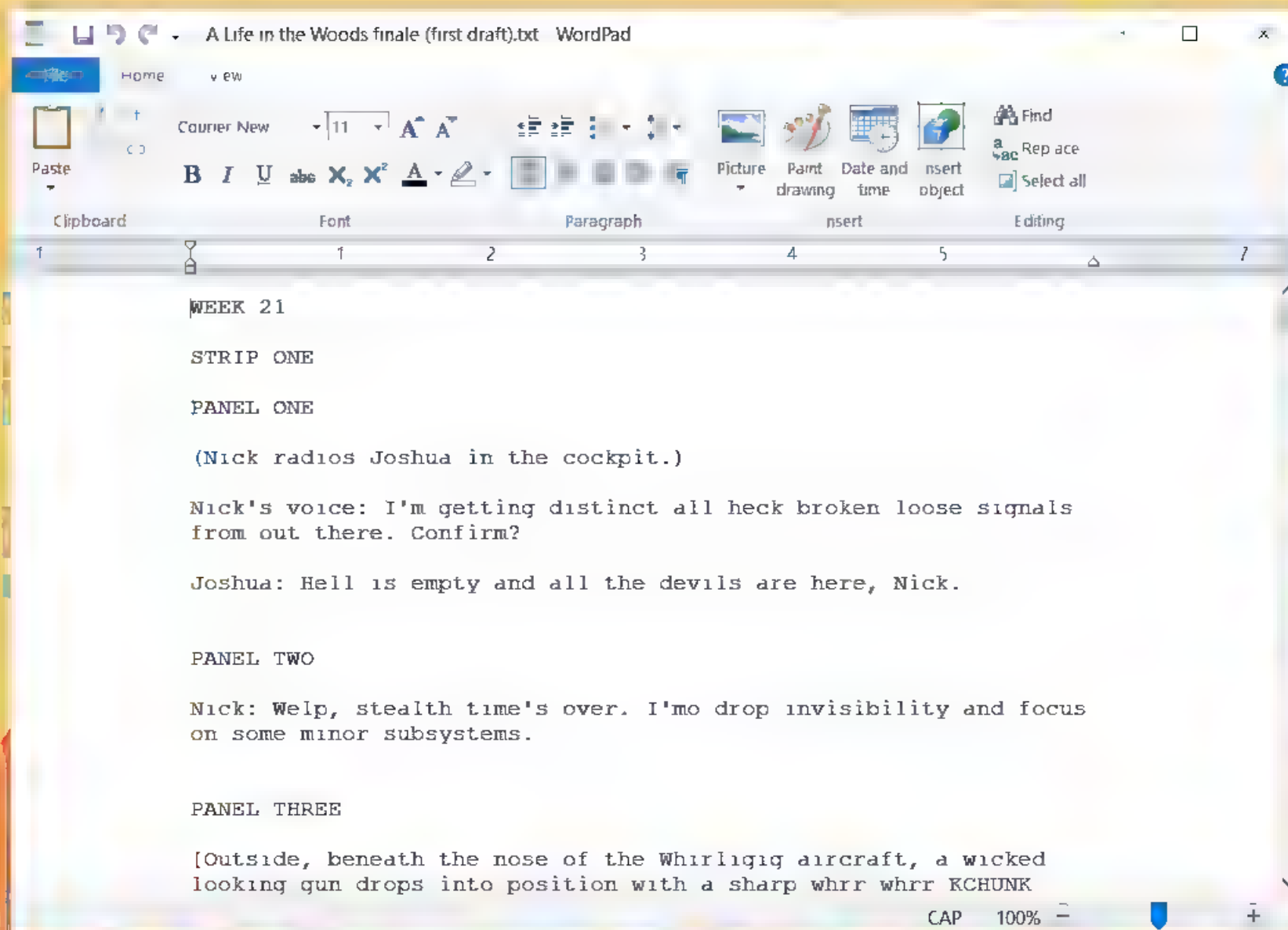
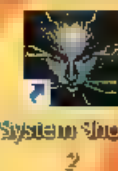
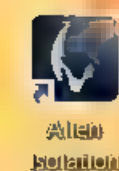
Since I cemented
my alpha status
by nailing an actual
goddess, I am
100% secure in
my masculinity.



Secure
enough
for a makeo-

Accept this
sensitive and
enlightened
response.





WEEK 21

STRIP ONE

PANEL ONE

(Nick radios Joshua in the cockpit.)

Nick's voice: I'm getting distinct all heck broken loose signals from out there. Confirm?

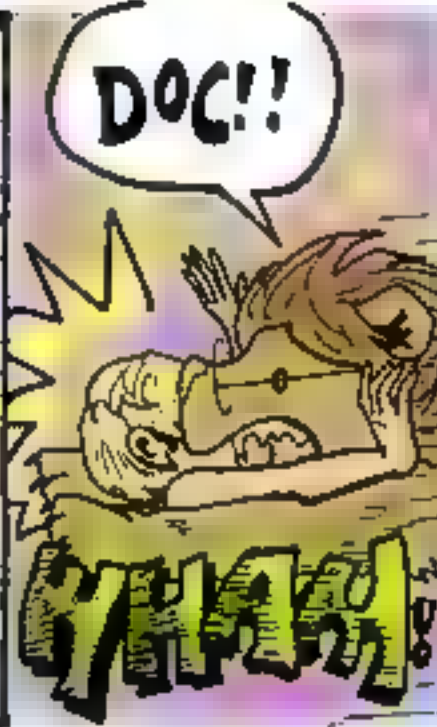
Joshua: Hell is empty and all the devils are here, Nick.

PANEL TWO

Nick: Welp, stealth time's over. I'mo drop invisibility and focus on some minor subsystems.

PANEL THREE

[Outside, beneath the nose of the Whirling aircraft, a wicked looking gun drops into position with a sharp whrr whrr KCHUNK



...and then I
see my creator!
Blood-spattered
lab coat
and all!

What
does he
do in
these
dreams?



He leans down and
whispers, "I'm
coming for you"!

That may be less
sinister than it seems.



Maybe it reflects
an unconscious urge
to return to the
comforts of the
past, to a simpler
time.



Guy invented the
Bloodworth Stabulator
900, but

sure,
comfort.

Ah, but was
he emotionally
supportive?



Are you planning to go on to Key West, Leo?

Queen Elena's offered me a residency.



I can work on my memoir! 'Course, I'll have to sell it as fiction because of the brain glaze...



You think it'll sell?



A cat **and** zombies? What do **you** think?



The Internet isn't real life, you know.



Sorry! Can't hear you over hashtag Apurrcalypse trending!





You're early, Queen Elena and her gang are still packing.

Having us here overnight may cause problems.



As if. The AG-I heroes on deck will accommodate you guys.

That's a problem.



Dibs on the hot psychologist okay bye!



Those elastic types are terrible on the rebound.

Please accommodate us less



Between you and me,
Cap'n, the zombies
can't leave soon
enough.

**service
service**



I'm so sick of
creepy stuff I
could scream.

**not service,
joy**



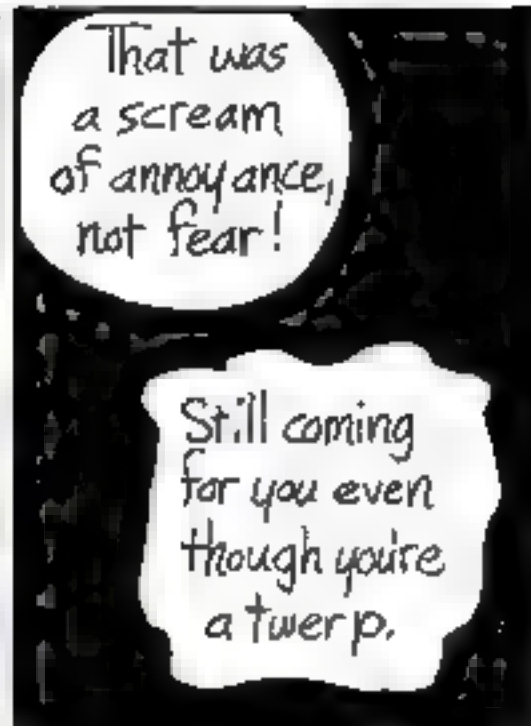
I'm
coming
for you.

AUGH!



That was
a scream
of annoyance,
not fear!

Still coming
for you even
though you're
a twerp.





Presenting.. the future of break-room technology!

The what?

The Institute sent you to work on the DoD account, not the OfficeMax account.

We gave you three billion dollars.

Well spent!

And remember: I am coming for you.

Not!
Not!
Not!

Don't tell anyone I just vented my cloaca!

Not
joy!
Not
not
not
joy!

This makes no
sense. Do you
even **have**
nightmares?

not!



Computer virus,
maybe?

They're
not running the
same OS.



Who's not running
the same—

destroy



Speaking of nightmares,
these two climbed in
bed with me.

just beat to
my socks
is all



So...a lion, a cobra, a
killbot, a water cooler,
and...whatever
Sweetdaddy
is.

clambakin
hepcat
yo



All experiencing
similar dreams.
Why?

They're
all nuts.



Oh, come
on. Just saying,
these people
brought **us**
in as voices
of reason.



Babe! I
got started
on the
new body!

Point taken,
but I still
want to dig
deeper.



Attention, undead passengers! We'll be flying you to Florida in pre-sorted groups!



Please board in an orderly fashion. You will not, repeat **not**, form a horde.



Unity will set an example for you.



I put my best foot forward!



I'm trying to be professional here.

Just keeping you on your toes.



Your majesty, our people are restless.



I demand they remain calm.

SKG JTCW20

There's no reason to revert to improper behavior on an uneventful flight.



I'm coming for you.



Permission to lurch around and bite anything in range?



If I say "denied," will it matter?

...brains?

Systems report
assholes
gnawing on
me! The hell's
going on?

Something
spooked
our undead
passengers.

Well, stop
'em! Use
psychology
and
stuff!

Right.
We need
to project
calm and
reassur-

HELP!!!
ZOMBIE
ATTACK!!!

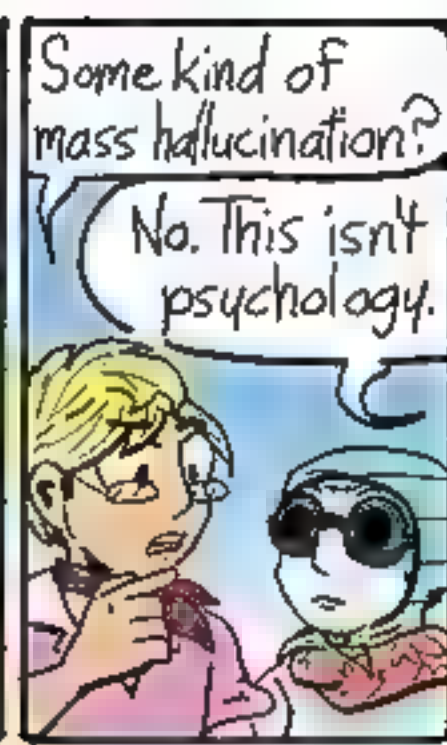
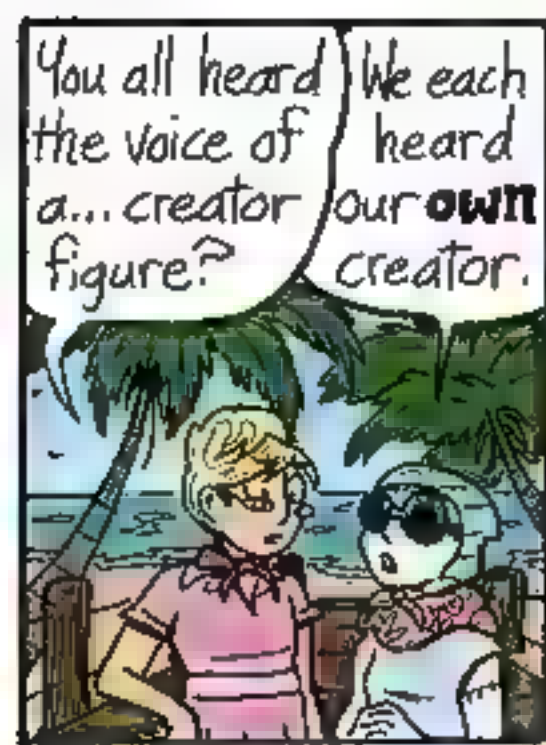
Erk!

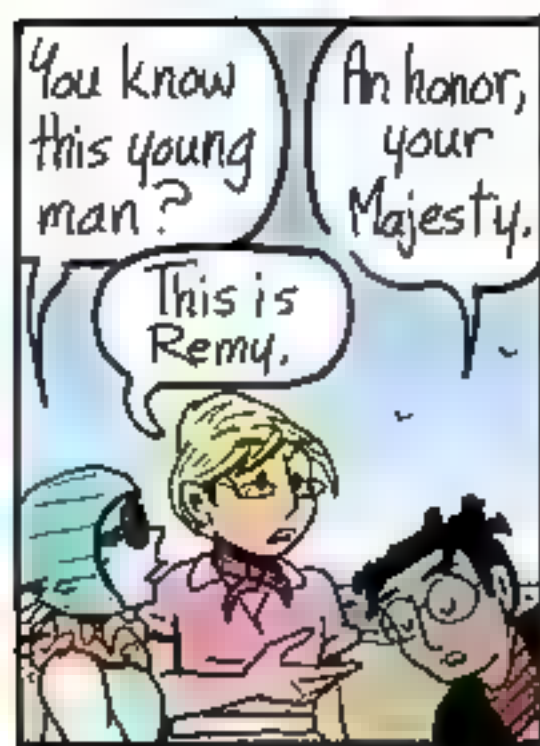
There's a zombie attack
and I'm not in it?

You dumbasses
are so lucky I
don't need this
body to fly.









Remy!
Gimme
five!

Hi, Unity.
Nice arm.



Sweetheart ripped
it off a dude.

See, I'm more than
able to provide
for Unity—



So you don't
need these?



OMG
it's like a
leaf pile of
appendages.

Okay, but I
also do the
household
budget.



Hey, Remy,
I know
we haven't
always seen
eye to eye...

Usually you
look like you
want to
bite me.



I thought you were
coming 'between me
and Unity. I was
immature to treat you
as a rival.



Guys! There were too
many good parts for one
body, so I barfed on 'em
all and now this thing is
me too!



You're not dog
enough for my
woman.



Ooh. Idea:
DOUBLE DATE.

I'm not dating a foot-faced thing. Pull yourself together.

Okay, fun hater.



I'm here to appease a restless spirit. Some transgenic cats keep hearing their late creator.



Lemme guess: he threatens to come get them.



Yes! Are you attuned to the spirit realm?

No, just the realm of impending messes.

Foot-face lumbered off. Let's get pie!





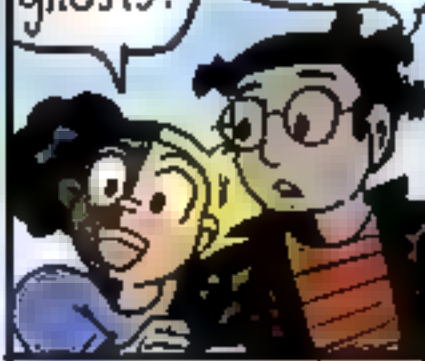
Thank you
for helping
to restore
my kingdom.

We should
investigate
these
"visitations."



On it, babe! Me'n
Remy are ready
to bust
some
ghosts!

We are?
Oh goo-



OOOOOO

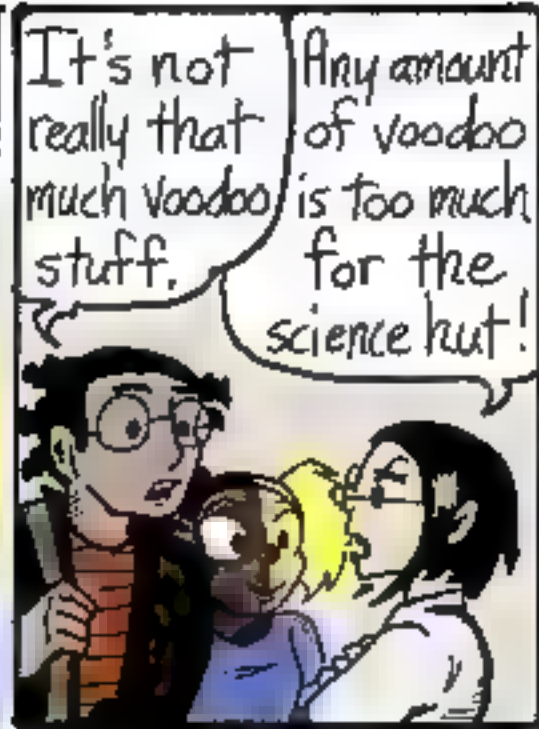
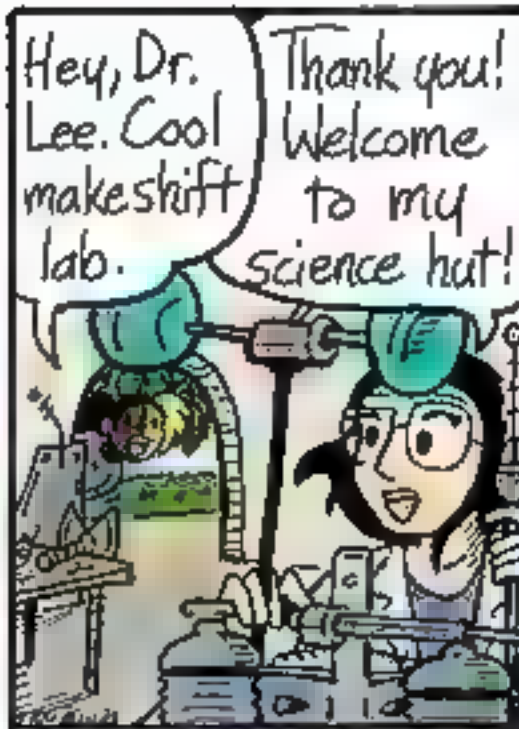
C'mon! I know
who's **gotta** have
proton packs!



Now try not
to blow
it up.

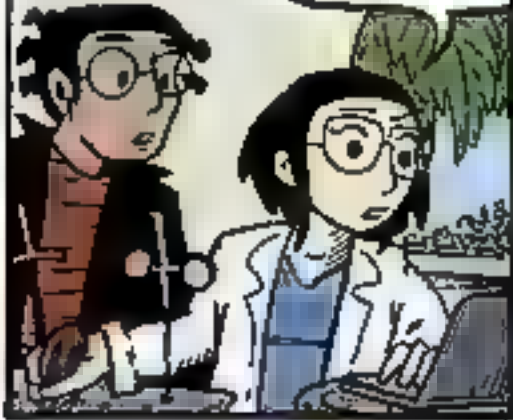
Can't
make any
promises,
ma'am.





You're
Unity's
creator?

Well, I
headed the
development
team.



You seem nice for
a mad scientist.

Oh, I'm
not mad!

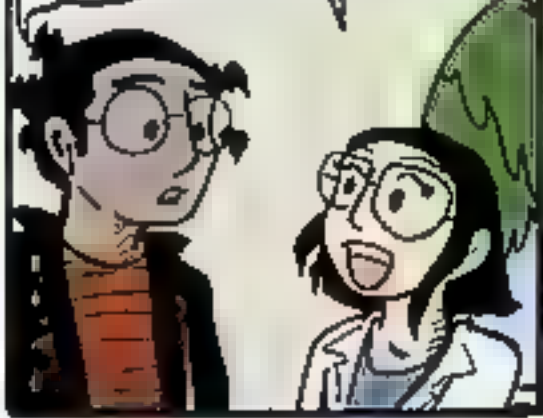


I just applied
mad science to create
secret technologies
for the forces
of evil.



Ah.
Yes,
Very
sane.

My boyfriend
is a
helicopter!



I sense restless spirits, and I'd like to try to bring them peace.

Oh. All right.



I expected more resistance from a scientist.

Well, **something's** going on.



The scientific approach is to test all possibilities until a theory holds.



Must the scientific approach involve a head in a vise?



Only if you do it right.



Okay, warn me when something paranormal happens.

It's not a warning. I don't sense anything to fear.

I need to record it! If you can sense whatever's causing the "spirits," it has a biological underpinning.

By isolating this force, we could control life **and** afterlife!

Now I sense something to fear.

Tell me all of God's weak spots!

See you

If it **is** the spirit of a mad scientist, my weather machine will attract it.

The Gede are drawn to the lost pleasures of the flesh.



Exactly! Like building weather machines!

Um, Dr. Lee?



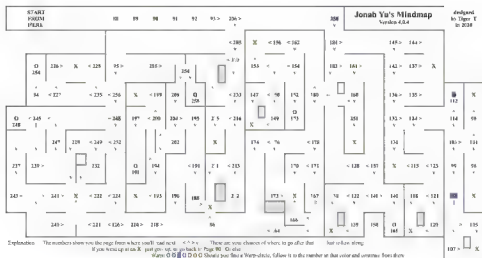
Though perhaps a biologist won't be interested in physics. I'm having the problem again!



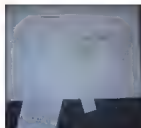
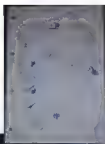
Is fire biology or chemistry or what?

It's very **you**, Unity, that's all I can say.





Progress Collage (non-digital part):



Unity, you just got that arm! What happened?

Same thing that happened to my weather machine. Unity.



Get serious, everybody. We're here to help, not -



OMIGOSH
A CAT KILL IT
KILL IT KILL IT



You're right. The missing arm makes Babe Control harder.



Sorry for
trashing
the science
hut, Dr.
Lee.

We don't
have time
to fool
around.



Yeah,
I know
...

Just
remember
that I'm
coming
for you.



Wha-?

I'M COMING
FOR YOU
YOU YOU
YOU YOU



YAH! Bad
personal boundaries!

I apologized for
eating your sock!





If the spirit took the form of a living person, we're not dealing with /wa of the dead.



There are spirits that were never mortal. I'll need more than this little rattle. Cool. Like what?



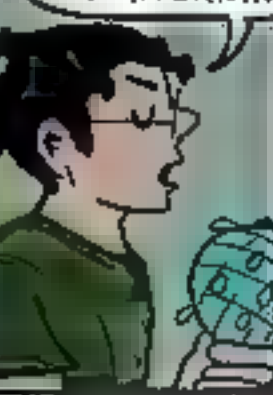
This slightly larger rattle!

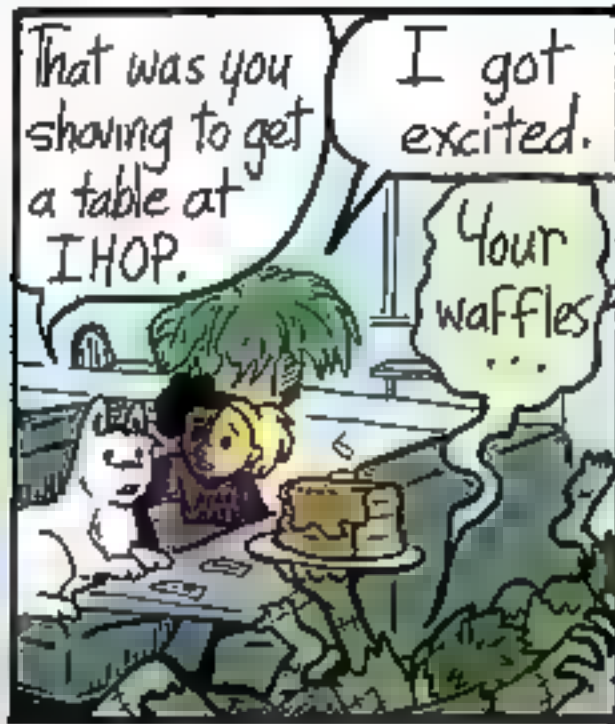


I was hyped for more like an engraved scimitar.



I have one of those, but it's non-ceremonial.





Looks like nonhumans
are having nightmares
of their
creators.

I haven't
had one.



Neither
has Nick.

Eh?



You haven't had a
vision of Dr. Lee
screaming that she's
coming... for
you...



Let's
rephrase
that.

I didn't know
it was a
nightmare!

It never is.





You deal
with crimes
against
nonhumans,
right?

Crimes
and
breakfast,
my dude.



Last night I had a
nightmare about my
creator, and when
I woke up my watch
was gone!



Small potatoes for
sleuths of our
caliber. Anything
notable about
the watch?



It was
on my
arm.

Sweetheart,
this looks like
a three-waffle
problem. Get
my syrup.



Multiple
zombies
were
attacked
last night?

By
something
that tore
limbs off.

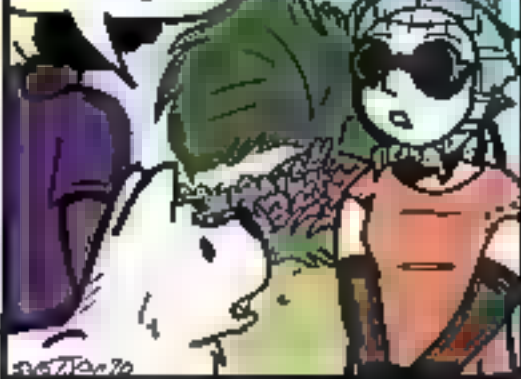
The attacks were
crude, animalistic...
almost
wolf-like.

Heeey...
you're not
accusing
me?

You **did**
bite one
of my
subjects.

Just
one! He
tasted
terrible!

Esteban
would like
that arm back,
by the by.



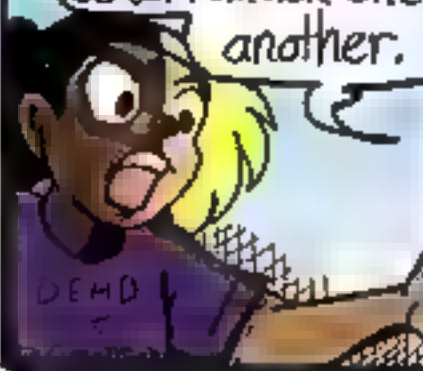
No way!
Babe
hates
rampaging!

What other
culprit
could there
be?



I dunno, the whole
island of rad
killer zombies?

You know our kind
seldom attack one
another.



I can't think of
any other large,
powerful
predators
here.



Yeah, this
place is
pretty chill.

For an
actual
lion, you're
easy to
forget.



I just came
out of my
atelier to
score some
Mountain Dew.

You don't think I'd go around mauling people?

Probably not, but tensions are high.

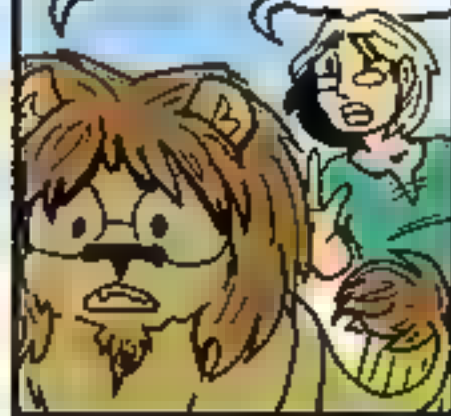
Say no more. I'll cage myself until you find the culprit.

Leo, no!

You don't have to go back to being a zoo animal! You deserve freedom and dignity!

Speak up! I got Fortnite and a National Geographic doc on.

Can I be caged too? I smell Doritos in there.



Tip, you and Nick
check the crime scenes.
Unity, we'll guard
Dr. Lee's
new lab.

Copy that!



And me? Thanks,
Remy, but I don't
think you can do
anything useful
right now.



I'll plumb the spirit
world, searching for
the presence that
stalks this island.



Like I
said,
nothing
useful.



Next time you
get ensorcelled,
don't come
crying to
me.

Babe!



Sorry to snap at Remy.
I just can't believe
in anything
I can't
bite.

Yeah, but
think.

The other explanation
is one of us going
on some whacked-out
mauling spree.

Isn't Remy's
spirit theory more
likely than that?

No, but
it'd be
nice if
it was.

There's Dr.
Lee! Let's
eat her! I
said greet her
shut up!





Thanks
for
helping
us out.

Of course.
This is a
grave
situation.



Er, no pun
intended. I hear
ya. Losing a
good limb sucks.



It's more severe
than that. Not all
zombies can just
stitch new parts on.



You mean
the just-a-
head thing
isn't a
lifestyle choice?

I wouldn't
call the French
Revolution a
"lifestyle,"
no.



No forced entry. The door was unlocked.

For serious? In Philly that shit'd get you shanked.



It's fascinating the different backgrounds we come from.

You're used to folks leaving doors open?



Also coy perfumed notes at the door... rose petals scattered on the stairs to the bedroom...



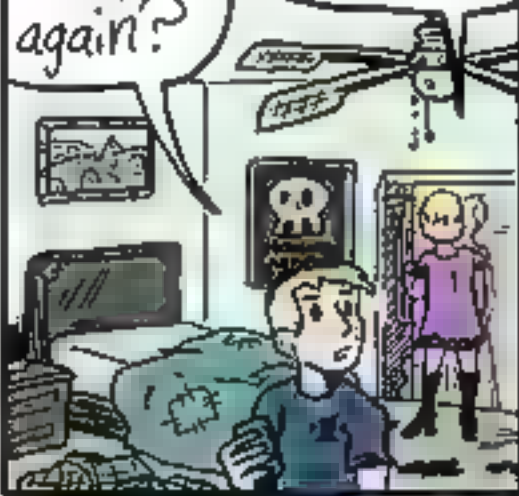
Is "insufferable" a background?

And I'm proud to live my culture.



What're we looking for, again?

Clues to the limb thefts.



Is there anything non-suspicious in a zombie's house?

He has a lovely collection of pink scarves.

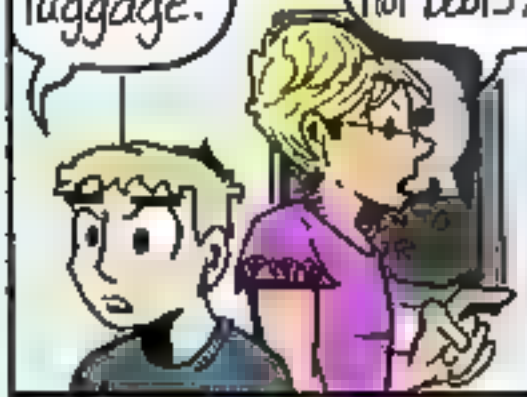


Those ain't scarves, dumbass.

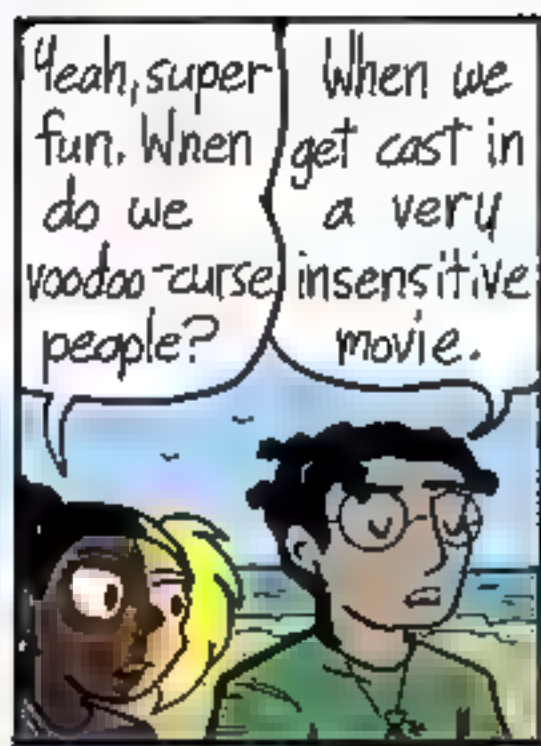


Oh. Erk.

Fly Unity cross-country, you learn not to scan the luggage.



He has nice leather b-nope, not boots.



So are we looking for ghosts or what?

Not quite. Lwa usually need a host to inhabit.

You think something's possessing zombies to attack other zombies? That's rad!

AIEEE!

That's **bad**. I totally said "bad" back there.

The spirits are disturbed, and I can relate.





Now how am I supposed to work my TV remote?

What kind of monster would do this to you?



Um, besides me, the other day.

I didn't see it! It bushwhacked me from behind!



Where was the other watch-zombie? What were you **doing?**



Beach volleyball.

Well, **that's** off now that you can't spike.



Where were **you** during the attack?

I ducked out to see Remy.



Unity!

I wanted to help him do magic fights and stuff.



SKG 2020

But he was just chilling and trying to stop the spirits from raging.



If he's trying to stop rage, it's backfiring badly.

Aw, don't dock him on Voodoo Yelp.



You left
your post
to see
Remy?

Don't blame
him. This
is on me.



I called an
emergency hearse
and let Tip know
there's been another
hit.



Should I skip
dinner to line up
replacement arms
while Esteban rests
at the morgue?



I'm not
sure. I
wasn't
expecting
competence.

I made
bacon-wrapped
rebar so I
won't get
hangry.



Hey Gin.
It's, uh,
getting
late.

Oh! Sorry!
The weather
shield is a
challenge.



You want challenge, try
having the sidekick role
on CSI:
Dead
People.

Did you learn
anything?



Just that Wilkin
gets along weirdly
well with zombies.
I guess
they're
vintage.

Where
is he?

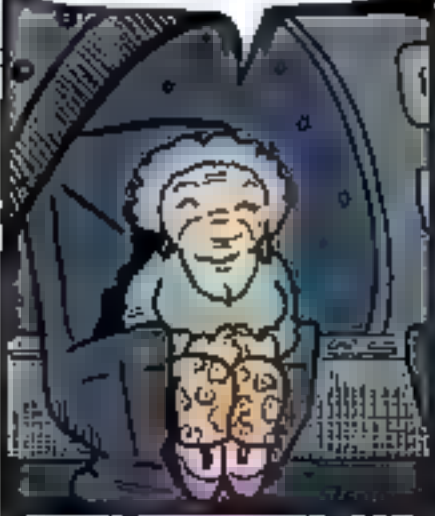


Got invited to a
barbecue. It's BYO.

Let's take a moonlit
walk along a
different beach.



Nicky! Come over
and give Bubbe
a kiss!



...Bubbe Z? Holy
sh...smokes, I got so
much to
tell you.

Of course,
bubbeleh.



You explain why my
only grandson is
shacking up with a
shiksa and turning
into aircraft.



Ohhh.
This is one
of them
nightmares.

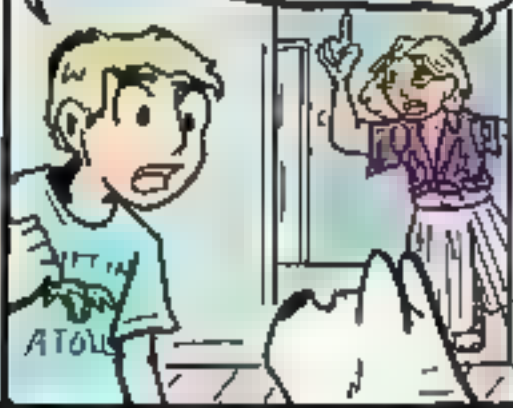
Might as
well go out
and get a
tattoo.



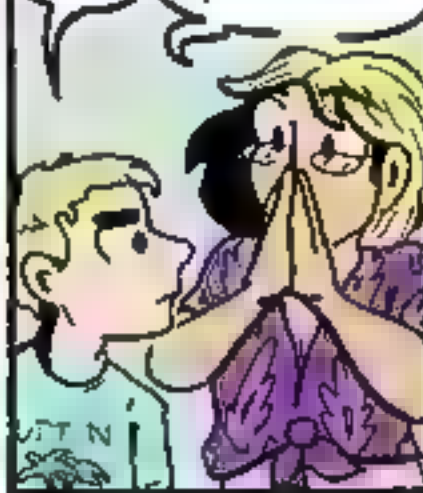




Listen, I had one of them dr-
Announcement!
You'll never guess what I dreamed about!



GASP!
How did you know?
Your mom.



I wasn't guessing
I was saying
"your mom."

Yes, it **was** my mom! Isn't that fascinating?



You do anything to a rolling donut?



I'd like to psychoanalyze myself, but last time I sprained something.



STICKLE

You had the "I'm coming for you" dream?

Not quite.



In my dream, my mother **might** come for me.

Hey, yeah. My bubbe said the same thing.



And no mutilations this time. Weird.

I know!



Why wouldn't anyone want **these** arms?

If you say "uneven wrists" I'll brain you.



You didn't experience anything unusual?

Not until Nick woke me up.



Same. Why is that?

Perhaps our rational temperaments resist mass delusion.



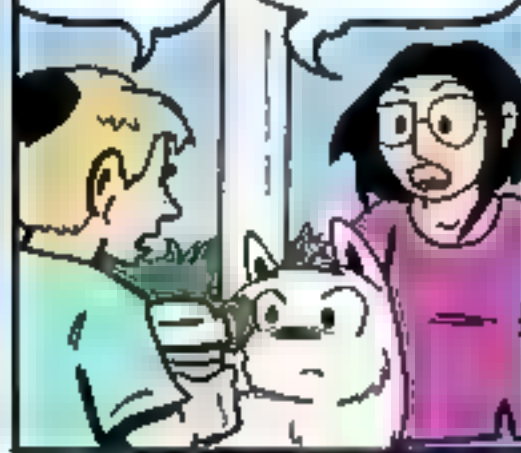
Rational? You're building a weather machine!

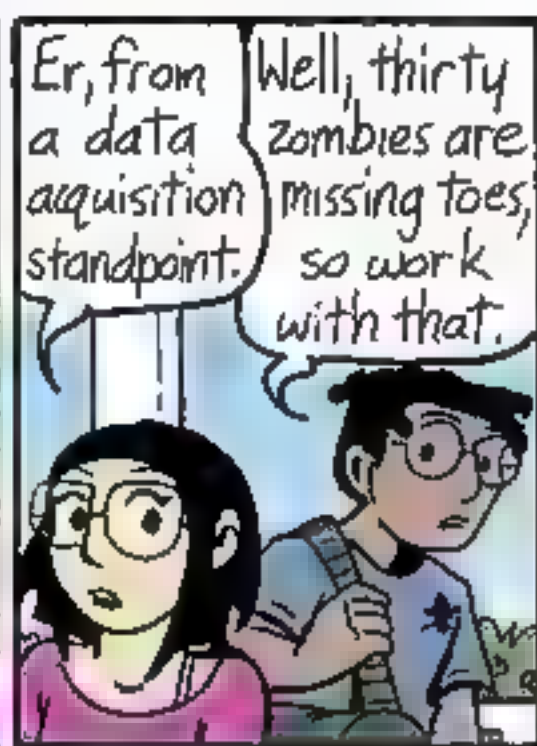
Yes, but **calmly.**



Drop it. It's a non-starter.

Look at my very sensible shoes!







My subjects
are in
crisis,
Agent
Fancy.

Your Majesty,
if I might
offer an
alternate
solution?

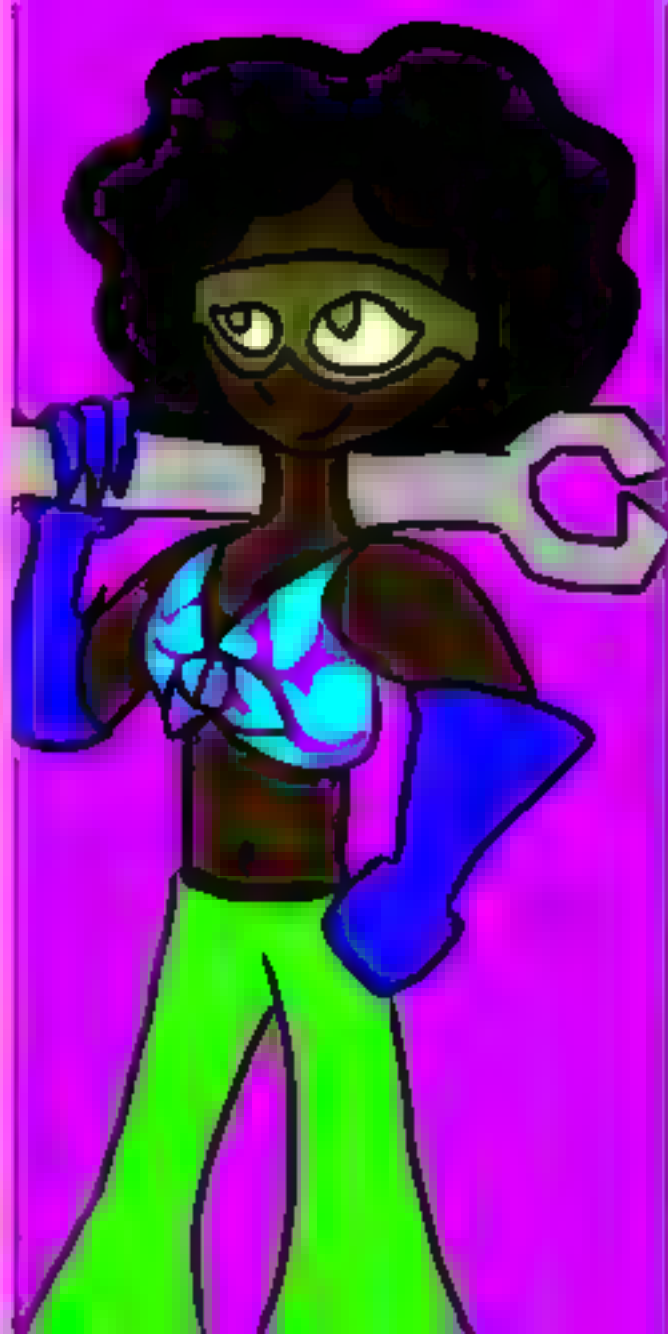
I believe the cause
is a restless spirit.
I will offer myself
as a steed to the
Lord of Pathways.

Your solution to the
problem of spirits
is... more spirits.

Honestly, it's my
usual solution.

When you
have a
voodoo rattle,
everything
looks like
a spirit.

On a
related
note, my
solution is
punching.



Your plan is intriguing. Proceed.

With respect, ma'am, why waste the resources?



I believe in a spiritual plane. Your friend may be right.

He's not my friend!



He's an annoying biped with stupid ideas, beautiful hair, and a lovely tenor voice!



Sometimes Babe's inner GPS takes her down weird roads.

If you're working up to hate-kissing me, I need my allergy meds.



Guess who's got no thumbs and made an ass of herself? This girl.

You gotta relax about Remy.

But he's so obviously perfect! What'll stop him from stealing you away?

Um, me, cause I have free will and can make choices?

Sorry. You're right.

Like when you were all, "Don't jump off that cliff with a pillowcase parachute" but I did.

Now, that time I was right.

So are you gonna let me help with Remy's ceremony tonight?

Nope.

Aw, but — I don't have the right to "let" you do anything.

I'm treating you as a partner, and I'm sorry for the times I did anything else.

Looking for hidden cameras. Don't see any.

I wish this was recorded. I think I'm being a very good dog.



Does this mean
you think Remy's
seance thing
will work?

No.

That's why I
plan to spend the
afternoon doing
old-fashioned
detective work.

One dog
can cover
a lot of
ground in
six hours.

One dog
and her
zombie!
Let's paint
the town
red!

Not the best
turn of
phrase for
a serial
maiming
case.

Make that
five hours.
I'll need to
freshen up
for voodoo.



Hi! We're investigating the recent assaults on—

Turn and walk away, breather.



Word of warning. If the Queen don't clear y'all out, it's gonna get messy.



Like mud-wrestling or more of a pie-eating contest?

Unity! Huge friggin' knife!



A knife! Pie confirmed!

Another visit from Good Cop, Bad-at-Reading-the-Room Cop.



GRAAH!

Aipe!

Not cool!

Nobody hurts Babe while I'm around!

Urk!

KLONK

Ow!

Sometimes Babe gets hurt, but in a friendly-fire kinda way.

Just grab the cleaver!



Belen 2010
15 MAY



We're on the verge of a riot. Where's that weather machine?

One more night! I promise!

You sure you can keep your mental clarity?

Of course! I have coffee!

SPLOOSH

Okay, mental clarity was a big ask.

I've been doing this every two hours and I'm fine!

An all-nighter ahead, huh?

I have to finish this and complete our mission.



Uh, anything I can do?

Just one thing.



I must ask you not to distract me with your intense sexual magnetism.



'Kay. I'll just keep bringing you espresso shots and marshmallows.

No! I told you! Be **less** attractive!



What's with me tonight? I'm baring my soul to everybody.



You're saying what needs to be said.

Am I mending fences? Do I feel like time is running out?



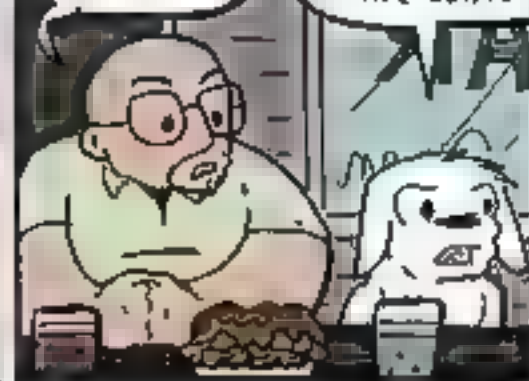
It is.

Heck, while I'm at it, I oughta make up with Remy.



Or, short-term goals, you could look over here.

If I actually see you, the voodoo man wins.



I have a message for you.

LA LA LA! Can't hear the ghost of my creator!



I'm— Yeah, you're coming for me! So what took you so long? Didn't you want me?



I do. That's why I talked to you first.



But I'd have returned sooner if I'd known your dreams had gravy fries.



Get your undead hands off the poutine!

You're...
not
Captain
Bram,
are you?

Just a visitor
who sees a
little promise
in your kind.



I thought it'd be
easier to talk to
them in the shape
of a parent
figure.



Then you're not
the ghost of my
creator.

No. Sorry. There
are no ghosts.



Ha! I gotta wake up
and rub Remy's
face in this!

A little promise.
Maybe very little.





Captain!

GASP

Thank crud I'm awake. I'm done getting jerked around by mysterious weirdo entities.

Babe! We totally got Remy possessed by a voodoo god!

On the other paw, the night's still young.

Got any tobacco and/or rum?

What the hell now?

Babe, this is Papa Legba.



Watcher at the cross-roads, keeper of the gates of life and death.

Plus he's got rocking taste in hats!



This is the weirdest you've ever been. Both of you. I want it to stop.



That's not what your wiggly foot says.

Damn wiggly foot.



I had one of those dreams. I know who's behind them.

Not a spirit, that's for sure.



How do you know?

Pup, I rule all roads between Vikolan and the earthly plane.



If any spirit came through bent on ill, I'd know it.



Turn back into the guy who was wrong so I can gloat!

Not till I get some earthly coffee.





The point is, I solved the mystery!

Pavane did it!



Exactly! She's beaming messages into our dreams!



Case closed! And sneaking around ripping folks' limbs off!



Wait, no. Case still open.

And I bet she's the one who drank our last hard seltzer.



I suppose
you know what
the threat is?
What's attacking
the undead?

Ask two
questions,
get two
answers.



We don't have time
for riddles!

Ma chouchoutet,
riddles are what
Papa Legba **has**.



It's okay, babe!
I know riddles!
How do you make
an elephant
sandwich?



Ain't she cute?
I've half a
mind to murder
her and take
her home.

Babe
and I
hotly
disagree
on the
recipe.





If you're just going to waste our time, "Papa Legba," why are you here?

I like dogs.



Then help me out! The whole island is turning against us!



How do we convince them we're not responsible for the attacks?

But y'all are.



This is not winning me over to voodoo as a thing.

Eh, I even like growly dogs.



Lee! Update on the weather machine!

Last oscilloscope tuned...and...done!



I stayed up all night wrestling with mad science and retained my sanity!



Er, Remy?

Lwa of the roads, chere. Got a light?



Seems not everyone was so lucky.

Ah! Coffee! I accept your offering!



You finished the weather machine?

Queen Elena will be able to block attacks from Anasigma.



Great! You've made the zombies of Bad Island safe!



'Scuse us. Angry zombie horde here to eat you all.



Now can you make **us** safe too?

Revisions? This is why I hate doing science on commission.



All the trouble started with you people!

My dudes! I know you're angry and scared and rampaging rules!



But Queen Elena asked for our help! You know why we're still here?



This awesome science lady just saved your butts from hurricanes! So there!



Thank you, but let's work on not using me as a human shield. Smell that giant brain!



Let's all calm down.
Tempers are high, but
I'm sure if we get
everyone together—



RAWR!



Ha! Take **that!**
I've overcome my
cowardice to save
the day!



Maybe
not
everyone.



This will be
the third-act
turn in my
memoir!



>yawn<



*'#G



I'm the only one who went to bed last night, huh?



Oh, Nick! Can you pick up donuts?



Yes, it's the

SKIN HORSE MAILBAG!

The LOOOOVE edition!



This month's excellent question: "How did plans for the Nick/Virginia romance evolve with time?"



You'll be happy to know I researched this by searching my entire mail archive for the word "goinking."



Of course.

I wasn't initially sold on the relationship. My notes had Lee pressured by her superiors to make romantic overtures to Nick in his VR apartment.



This included the phrase "lie back and think of the Illuminati," which is a terrible phrase.

What?



At the time, I was in favor of Tip/Lee as the OTP, which is a little mind-blowing now.



I planned to eventually reveal that Tip and Lee had a history of hooking up many times...



... each time in the context of a mission that required them to get their memories erased afterward.



I have never heard any of this.

But **I** would've had to reveal that mind-wiping doesn't exist, which is why we never see any mind-wiped people except Ira.



I originally snipped Nick with a supply pilot who would meet him in a midair refueling scenario.



Only so you could do filthy refueling jokes.

The relationship between Nick and Lee didn't so much "develop" as "instantly trash all my plans from the moment they began interacting on-page."



I seem to recall you were sold on it from the drawing board up?



Ha ha ha! Yes!

As soon as it became clear the readers dug Dr. Lee, I wanted to hook her up with a hateable foul-mouthed twerp.



I set myself the challenge of getting everyone to root for this nightmare pairing. And I did it! I'm awesome!



BWA HA HA HA HA HA HA



She writes all their makeout scenes. It's not healthy.



I'm not even done! I have sketches from TEN YEARS ago I still can't share because of spoilers! HA!



Break it up!
By order of
the Queen!



Return to your
homes! Bad Island
is under lockdown
until we find the
mauler! Repeat-



YAGH!

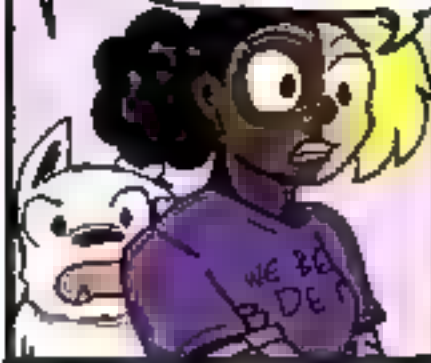
GRAB



Lockdown over.
Resume your
brawl.



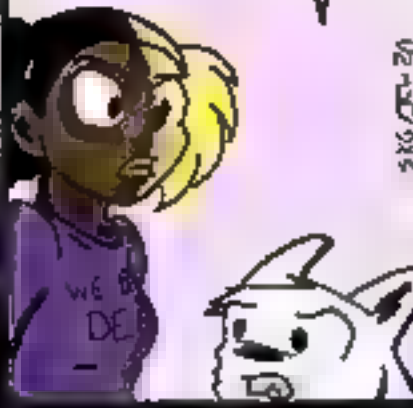
What the hell?
I know! I thought Foot-Face was a one-off gag!



I mean, usually corpses I infect run down. Dude's still out doing his thing. Its "thing" is grabbing limbs!



Yeah, not cool. What's that behind your back?



Limb I grabbed. Foot-Face, then talk about pacifying you. But I wasn't **sneaky** about it.



This is our attacker?

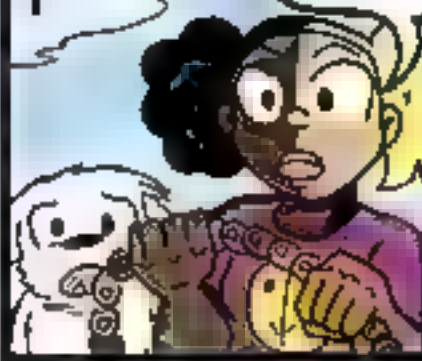
Afraid so, ma'am.



Some of the body parts must be able to sustain Unity's nanoblood.

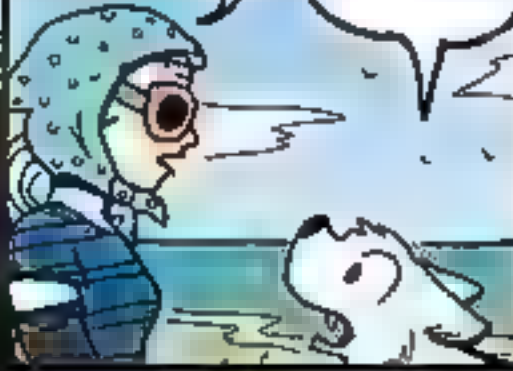


This **was** our fault. Plus side, y'all's toes made a cool scorpion tail.



This was **not** how I hoped you'd unify the community.

We'll give the toes back! Promise!



Once the stolen parts
have been returned,
what's to be done
with... er...
Foot-Face?



We've dealt with
this kind of issue.
Gestalts can become
erratic when split
from their source.



I suggest
consulting Unity to
see if she has...
any...



She, um,
may
have
ideas.

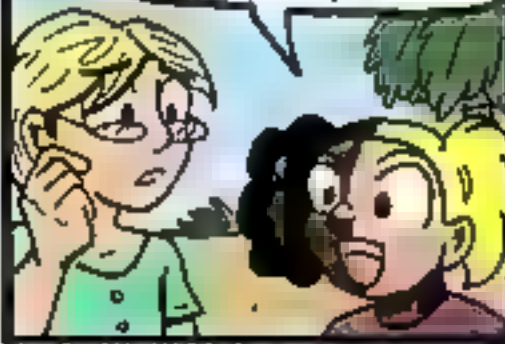


Sorry! You
were talking
for like
five whole
minutes!



I'm having trouble internalizing that you ate the culprit.

And **I** internalized the culprit!



But how... why...

He was part of me all along. I just took him back.



It's hells of normal! Like eating your toenail clippings!



Which I don't do!

Ooh, are **you** missing out!



I don't understand something. How did...

Foot-Face.

... send the dreams?



That was someone else's work. A being called Pavane.

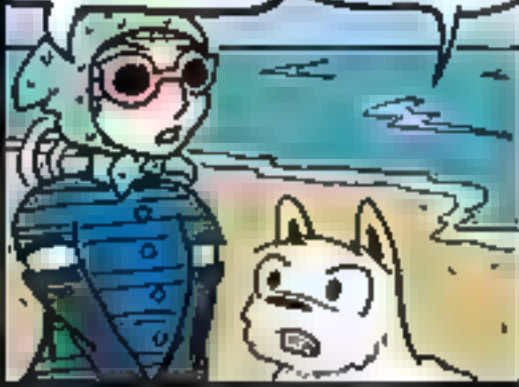


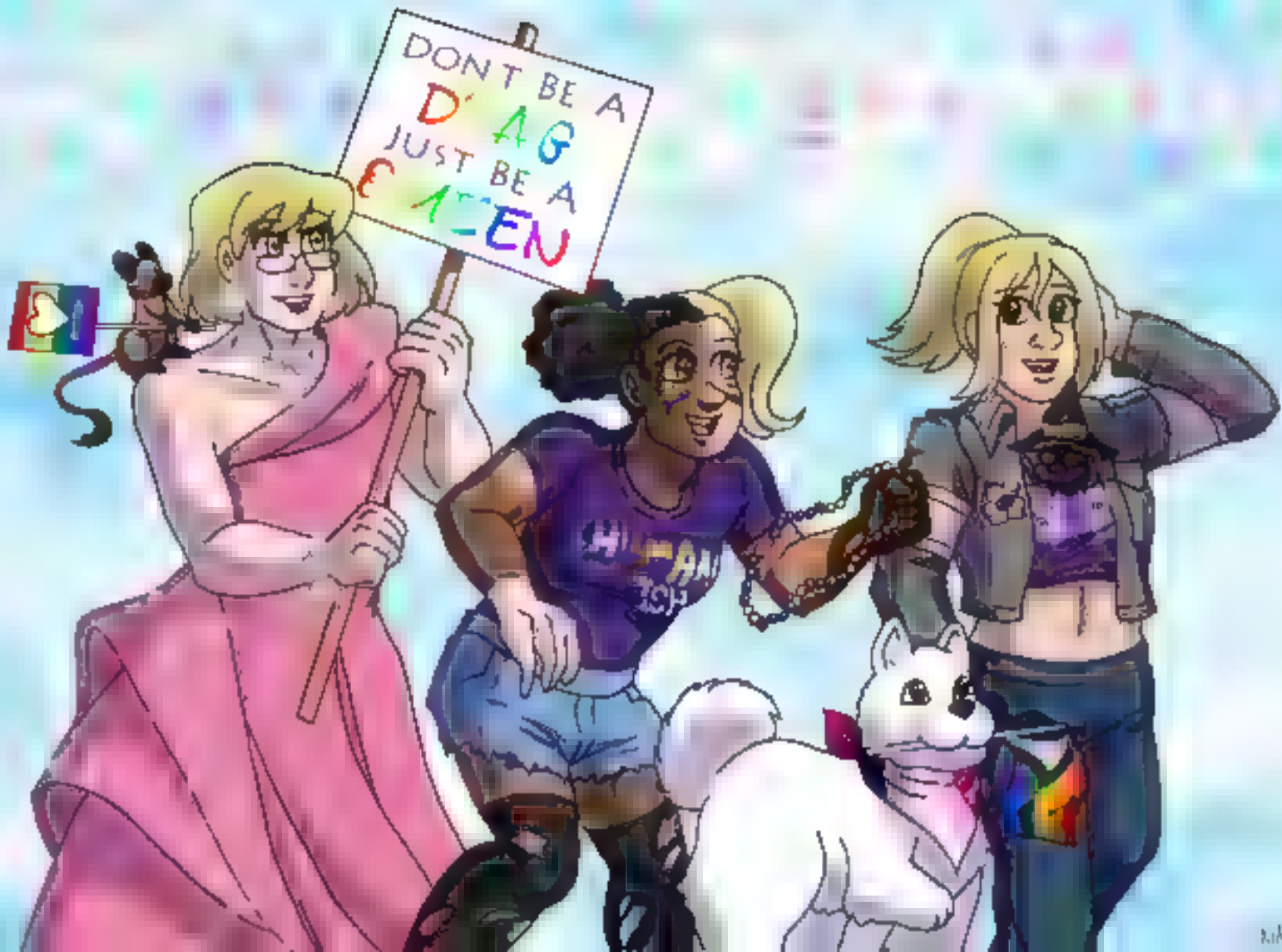
I don't know what her game is, but I think bad times are coming.



Worse than sorting out something called "Foot-Face"?

It wouldn't help to mention she's alien bees, would it?





You have caused injury and chaos.

Yeah, but you wouldn't know it was us if we hadn't solved the mystery.



The mystery you created.

And we built a weather machine so A-Sig can't tsunami you.



And we found you a cool hat. So, final tally, we did like 75% good, 25% bad.



Leaving the government hasn't improved your average, has it?

It's baked into the job.



Can I keep the hat?

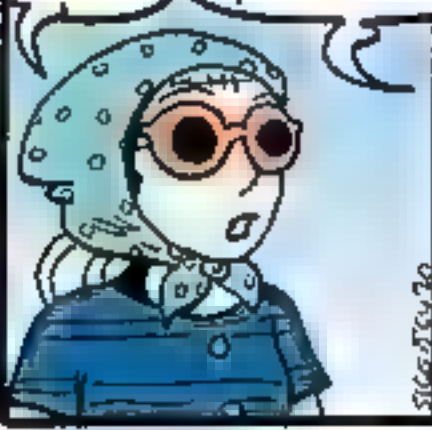
You make a good point. In the balance, you did more good than harm.

U'hear that? I made a good point!

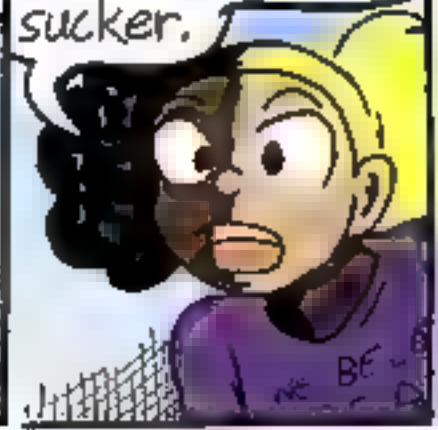


Let us part as friends.

Everybody! I made a good point!



Would you sign a statement re: me making a good point? I will frame that sucker.



Let us part as friends who don't see each other that often.

I can notarize it. I trained for **weeks**.



Hey,
Remy.
How're
you
feeling?

Like a stretched
out sweatsock.
Papa Legba's a
big, big soul.



You said we were
behind the attacks,
and you were right.

I didn't say it.
He did.



I think I get it.
Going into a trance
helps you access
unconscious insights
and so on.



I'm accessing the
insight that I need
about six aspirin.

All the rum probably
does something too.



No offense, but I hope our next limbo exchange is less eventful.

Yeah, about that.

Next time you got parts saved up, give 'em to these stiff's.

They can't all use 'em, but it'll help make up for the crud I put them through.

Not even a few fingers for an emergency?

Nah, I'd just eat 'em on the way home.

You're staying on the island?

Of course! The Keys are ideal for the writer's life!



Here I walk the paths that Hemingway trod.



You know Hemingway, er, **shot** lions.

I walk them and territorially spray them.



I think I'll take a different path back.

Ha ha! Islands in the stream, beardo!



Jonah?
We're heading back to Annex One.

Cool, ma'am.
You can help with the Greenback's Hollow crisis.



A-Sig attacked those possums and turtles. Night raid.

The what?



What?
Why didn't you tell me?

We did!
It's right there on our blog!



Jonah, I've never read your blog.





How could this happen?
The nonhumans at
Greenback's Hollow
are part of the
community!

Were.



Most humans have
gone reality blind.
The possums and
turtles were forgotten,
like that sea monster
we saved.



Argh... we're on
our own, and we
can't have eyes
and ears
everywhere.



Though if
I barf on
a bunch of
eyes and
ears...

Let's put
a hold on
barf-
related
plans for
a while.



Nick, we need to get airborne. A-Sig just struck.

Yeah duh. That asshole tiger's already tweeting about it.



What? How did you know?

Brain wifi, Scrappy Doo.



No matter what this meat body's doing, I'm jacked in.



Even when... er...

I like that he can order a pizza for afterward.



Your filthy minds...

H.T. is already exploiting the A-Sig attack.

It's personal. He helped create those turtles.



To use as a voting bloc! He never cared about them!

Does that matter?



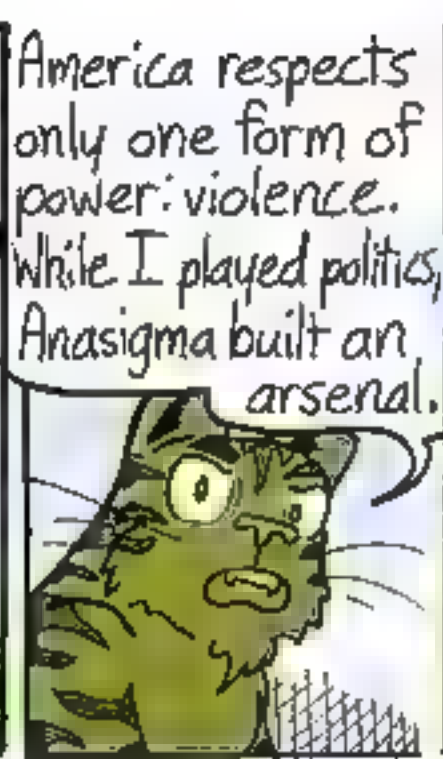
We're in a crisis. Maybe his motivation isn't important if it's toward a good cause.



New cause: eat the entire Rust Belt.

Are you sure, sir? The Akron-Canton area will give us reflux.





We have to do more than react to Anasigma. We're always a step behind.



Of course we are! They've got a high-tech militia installed all over the country!



They can brainwash people and control the weather!



Maybe so. But they lack one advantage.



If you say it's that we're so pretty, I will bite you on the leg.

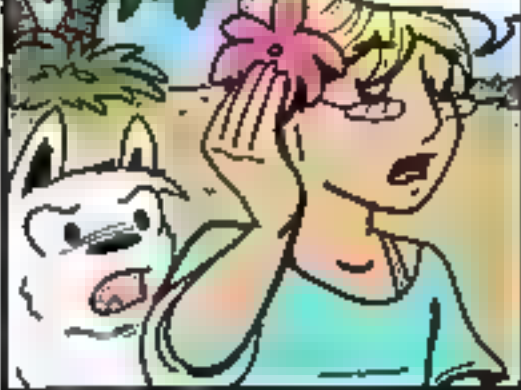


That's why I wear Kevlar hose.



Tip,
get
serious.

I'm not
serious.
I'm frivolous.
We can use
that.



If we're short on
firepower, we use
soft power. We
charm. We form
alliances.



We're kinder than
the enemy, we're
smarter, and, yes,
we're cuter.



And when
soft power
fails, there's
our giant
robot.



The robot
is cute
too. Good
cheekbones.

SEE THE WEIRD



Then.

What?! Sir,
you can't join
the Biomass!

I can,
Renard,
and I shall.

Sorry,
but
I'm
out.

Are you
afraid to do
what it takes
to secure our
freedom?

No! I'll aid my
fellow transgenerics
on my own, no
matter what the
cost.

So.

we had a bad
dream! can we have
650 cups of warm milk?

You're
draining
my Vermo.

Why even
make turtles
that drink
milk?

a tiger hired
an opossum
to create us
so we'd vote
for him!



Yeah, I know
that much.
our creator was
tony! who's yours?



Oh...a biotech startup
created me to be its
mascot. It was to
be, in the CEO's
words, "epic lulz."



After I secured
controlling stock while
everyone was at a mixology
retreat, yes, yes it
was.



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Sorry H.T. left you
in the lurch and your
possum daddy
exploded.

oh!
tony's back!



Say
what?

he's
coming
for us!



Tony and his partner
died three years ago!
You **saw** him?

in the nightmare!
weren't you listening?



11/16/20 20

I was distracted by
your surprisingly
challenging
snack.

exactly 2ml
apiece or we
murder you in
your sleep!



I don't believe it.
A postcard
from H.T.

ohboy!
i love h.t.!



In spite of
myself, me too.

what's he
up to?



Behold the Mind-Cancer
Lily! Its pollen is
madness, its water the
blood of men!



...Gardening,
sounds like?

tell him to
plant lettuce!



you won't
let tony
get us,
will you?

Didn't
you guys
like
Tony?



this was
different.
it was
spooky
tony.

That was a
dream. Tony's
gone, leaving
nothing behind.



Nothing but a manifesto
about a "Mothership"
that will summon its
children via brain
rays...



thanks,
renard!
i feel
lots better!

Great.
Now **you**
reassure
me.



Take me to
Tony's old place.

Why?

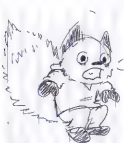
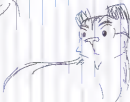
If his notes
are still there, I
want to try to
parse them out.

That mad genius's
library may hold
ideas beyond
imagination!

"...the goblin
stroked his king's
sinewy thigh. 'enter
my labyrinth,'
he whispered."

I'm gonna
try **this**
end of the
library.





I'm a rational fox. I should be able to puzzle out Tony's notes.

dress in silver lamé, like tony!



I'll, er, take that on board.

climb up a tall thing, like tony!

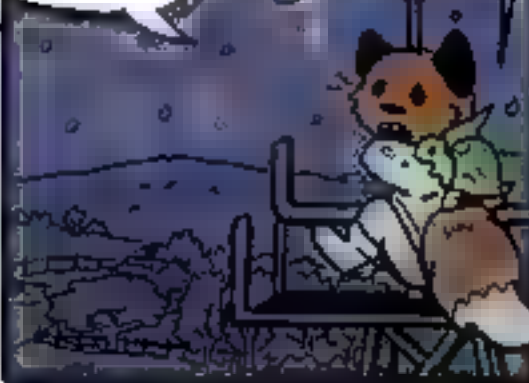


Thanks, but I'm sure I can think of a more logical approach than copying Tony.



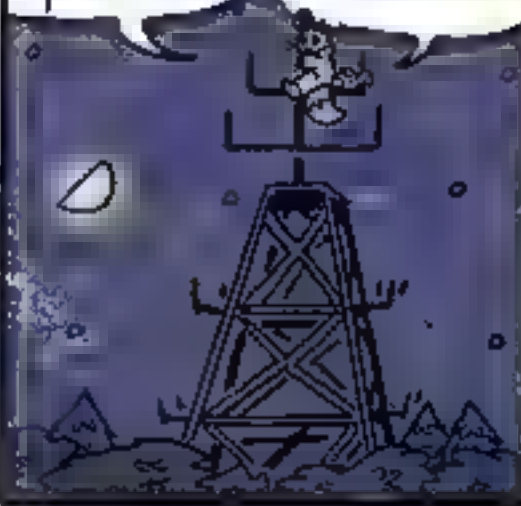
I'm a rational fox. I'm a rational fox.

you could try being gay, like tony! i have books!



Why did
I climb
up here?

maybe
there'll be
fireworks!



I wanted a new
perspective of
some kind, but all
I can see from
here...



...are mercenary
troops marching
on the town.



Never mind.
Perspective
stinks.

yup!
fireworks!





who are
those
soldier
people?

Guess we'd
better find
out. Crud.

By the way,
what's your name?

oh!
i'm #12!

You just use an
assigned number?

ha ha! no!
my birth number
was #18!

You're
a rebel,
#12.

the original #12
is now #256.
she's out there!

HA! Another monster
to clear out!

Wait!



I look harmless,
but I'm not
alone! #12, **now!**



PLAP

yaah!



So, what, I lick this
and get salmonella?

I look harmless,
and I **am**
harmless.



That all you've got?
A tiny turtle?

No.



Hey!

Urgh!



A **lot** of tiny turtles. it's fun to do violence instead of just thinking about it!



Then

can read, Sally

do we
need to know
the
freedom

What do
you want
to do
now?

It can't
go along
with us

freedom

It's not as good as this

I can't read
to do my to do
transfer in
a matter
of
time

Now

but ~~it's~~
~~driving~~

we had a
nightmare
can we have

650g of
of sweet
milk

my mind just

So
I put
it in
the
box

It's
a
box

It's
a
box

It's
a
box

Behind the
Red-Car

It's
a
box

...Gardner,
sounds like

tell him
the code
- 1234

It's
a
box

If he's  Cosmognathus

It's
a
box

It's
a
box

It's
a
box

I'm gonna try
the red
the red

It's
a
box

It's
a
box

why
are guys
attacking
us?

If H.T. was
right, the
New War's
started.



but
what
did
we
do?

I don't think
they care
what we did.
They care what
we **are**.



oh.



if doing stuff doesn't
matter, i should've
done more crimes!

The night's
young.



We'll head to Kansas. There's a nonhuman safe zone.

how? humans turned stupid & can't hear us talk.



"Talking" is passé. Linking my account to a transit app... reserving seats... **done.**

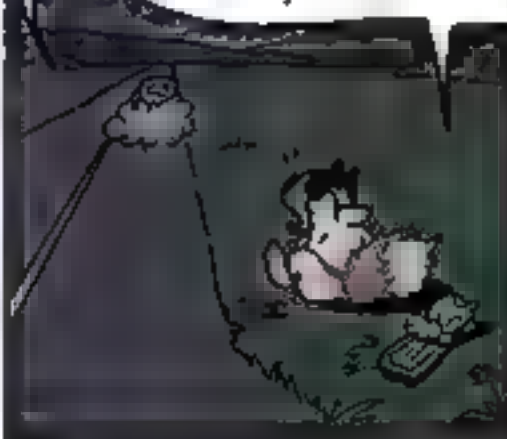


Now the driver scans the QR code and—



ARGH! Vermin! Geddoff!

Self-driving vehicles are coming, you ape! that just cost you \$68.95.



Damn anthropocentric society! Every mode of travel has a point of human contact!



With humans reality-blind, all normal options are out —



You just gonna leave the keys in the truck?



Why not?
Nobody's here.



Abnormal options it is.



Okay, #12. You've rounded up as many turtles as you could find?

yup!

I'll shift into gear. Gas pedal team, I need you to gently —

on it!



This is for science — this is for science —

gas pedal team will not be contained!

WE'RE MAKING GOOD
TIME WHICH MAKES
SENSE GIVEN WE'RE
DOING 140 HERE



speed is
our reason
for being!

GREAT BUT THERE'S
AN EXIT SO I
NEED BRAKE PEDAL
TEAM —



they're
asleep!

WHAT
?!

they weren't
busy, so
they took
a nap.

I TOLD YOU TO SPLIT
THE RED BULL
EVENLY!



caffeine is
for winners!

Well, we survived
long enough to run
out of gas.

yay!!!



The pump's not
taking my payment.
The one thing we
can use, and it's
broken.



What excuse
could they have
for not honoring
the mobile pay
option?



That's... a good
excuse.

get more
red bull!





Comic-Con 2020



did you
get any
meat
sticks?

Start the
truck!
Start the
truck!



Whatever's going
on in this town,
I don't want
to be involved.



It has nothing
to do with us,
and I'm happy
to leave it that—



Why,
Renard!
Fancy
meeting
you here!

And it has
to come
up and
introduce
itself.



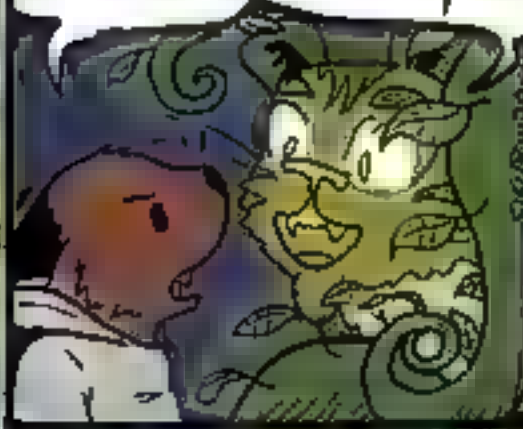
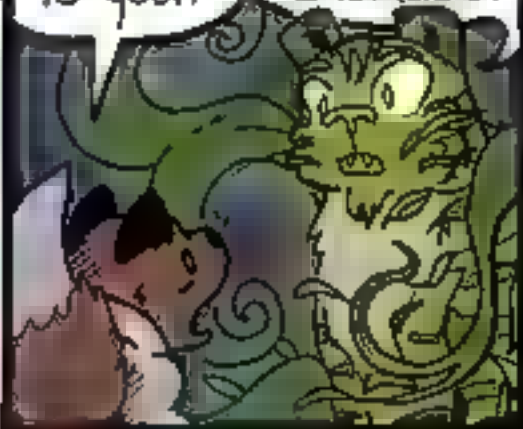
**H.T.?!
What
happened
to you?**

You know
that. I
joined the
Biomass.

But If humanity
the, wants monsters,
er, we'll give them
tendrils monsters.
...

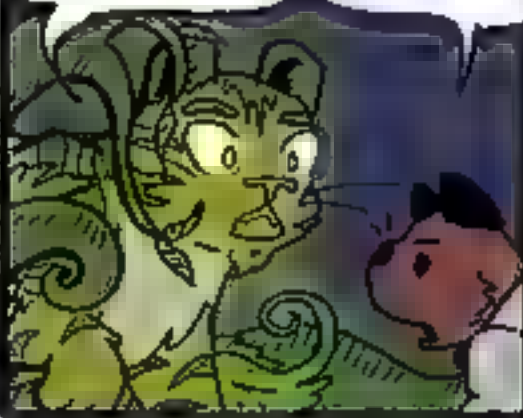
Is it **our** fault
they're too reality-
blinded to run when
we devour
them?

I hereby
resign
as your
webmaster.
Have you been
on the site
lately? We
have recipes.



Come with
me, Renard.
You can be
of use to us.

How? Our
PAC is
clearly
defunct.



We don't need
political power.

I doubt there's
anything for me
to bankroll.



No, we don't
need money.

Then what **do**
you want
from me?



We **are**
still a mite
peckish...

Protein.
Yeah,
it just
clicked.



You may as well join us. Where else would you go?



Anasigma is razing nonhuman communities. They'll begin targeted assassinations soon.



You're better off with us.

You want to eat me!



But we'll **savor** you.

It **is** nice to be appreciated.



You think you've beaten me, but there's one thing you don't know.



Oh? What's that? I have backup! To me, my turtles!



oboy! it's h.t.!

you're all green + stuff!

we love you!

yay!



Fawning admirers! Thank you, Renard.

What happened to the tiny bloodlust?



can you
mutate me
too?

i want
3 eyes!
no, 4!

Oh, you
charming
little
morsels.

Turtles! Run
for it!

it's
h.t.! we were made
to love him!

He's changed! He's
bent on an agenda
of devouring all
sapient life!

got
it!

devouring
sapient
life now!

This is
why I
don't talk
politics.

grr!

- 
1. Working Undercover for the Man
They Might Be Giants
 2. Strange Powers
The Magnetic Fields
 3. Believe E.S.P.
Deerhoof
 4. Artificial Life
Operation Ivy
 5. Strange Love
Karen O
 6. Silverfish
Belly
 7. Pads, Paws and Claws
Elvis Costello
 8. Dead Man's Song
Mark Cutler
 9. Air
Talking Heads
 10. Bodysnatchers
Radiohead
 11. Remember the Tinman
Tracy Chapman
 12. Dr. Strangeluv
Blonde Redhead
 13. Evil Hearted You
Catalina Scramblers
 14. Bee Girl
Pearl Jam
 15. Outro with Bees
Neko Case

C'mon, turtles!
We were friends!

As were we,
Renard. Alas,
things change.



The war's started.
Choose a side.
Us or the
humans—



BRAKES ON HITY
TRAIN DEFINED
AS NULL VALUE
WOOOOO



...or
these
idiots



oboy!
can we eat
the robot?

This is a bad time
to be spread thin and
far from
center.

We can take
'im, h.t.!



We can't assimilate
a thousand-ton
machine. Not yet.
Everyone retreat.



just... gotta...
nrgh...
dream big...



Except the usual
sacrifices to Darwin,
we suppose.

...can
feel assimilation
happening...



come on...
assimilate...

STOMP

WHUP

did i
assimilate
it?

Sorry, #12.
It's just
you and
me now.

assimilate!
assimilate!

I need to
assimilate
two aspirin
and an
ice pack.

nop
hop
hop

For the record, that was a **really** stupid move.

i thought h.t. would save me

Yeah, well, don't count on him.

you saved me though!

I feel I ought to protect you, no matter how stupid you act.

Oh hey! Fox guy knows our mission statement!

For the last time, not everything I say is a mission statement!





So Skin Horse
has gone rogue.

Yeah! Neat, huh?



But it ain't all
pancake socials.
Living on the run,
we suffer constant
deprivation.



Namely, babe won't
let us get streaming
channels.

They
add up!



How
do you
live?

Enjoy these
exercise videos
we got off a
sidewalk in Tampa.



1. **Crazy=Genius**
2. **Experiment IV**
3. **Overpowered by Funk**
4. **Extra Savoir-Faire**
5. **The Analog Kid**
6. **Senses Working Overtime**

Rush

7. **Man Machine**
8. **Fight Test**
9. **10,000 Feet**
10. **Tonight We Fly**
11. **Fly**
12. **Dissidents**
13. **Poison Flowers**
14. **Le Monster**
15. **Lawyers, Guns and Money**

Luscious Jackson

Warren Zevon

You're welcome to stay with us, provided you can contribute.

How?

Er... maybe you have a useful skill. What do you do for a living?

Nothing.

Ah, well, that's a common problem - I live off dividends from the company I own.

Alternately, Welcome aboard, sir. I'm good at this phone game where you feed cats.

you
look
down,
renard.

I'm a mess.
Everything's
a mess.



I joined H.T.
because I believed
in real change. But
this is just more
butchery.



I don't know what
I should've done
with my life, but
not this.



i exist to
vote &
murder, &
here i am
doing squat.

Also, the only
shirts here
in my size
have Paw
Patrol on them.



Hey!
Where
am I?



Huddle lounge,
little bro,
C'mon, you're
missing
Beer Pong.



Rudy!
You were
on the
team that
made me!

Truth. Now, I've
got a message for-

This is that
dream everyone's
been having!



Yeah, but
can you
act
surprised?



Is this the
old startup
space? Can
I visit the
cereal bar?



I'm coming for you.

Sure. Fine. I've got no room to complain.



I helped start the New War. I can't make amends or even look people in the eye.



Maybe it's for the best if some creepy dream-invading entity steals me away.



SHOJICWZU

But first, Lucky Charms.

I picked the marshmallows out. My penance begins.



Stay here, #12.
These people will
take care of you.

you're leaving?

I have to.
I don't belong
here.

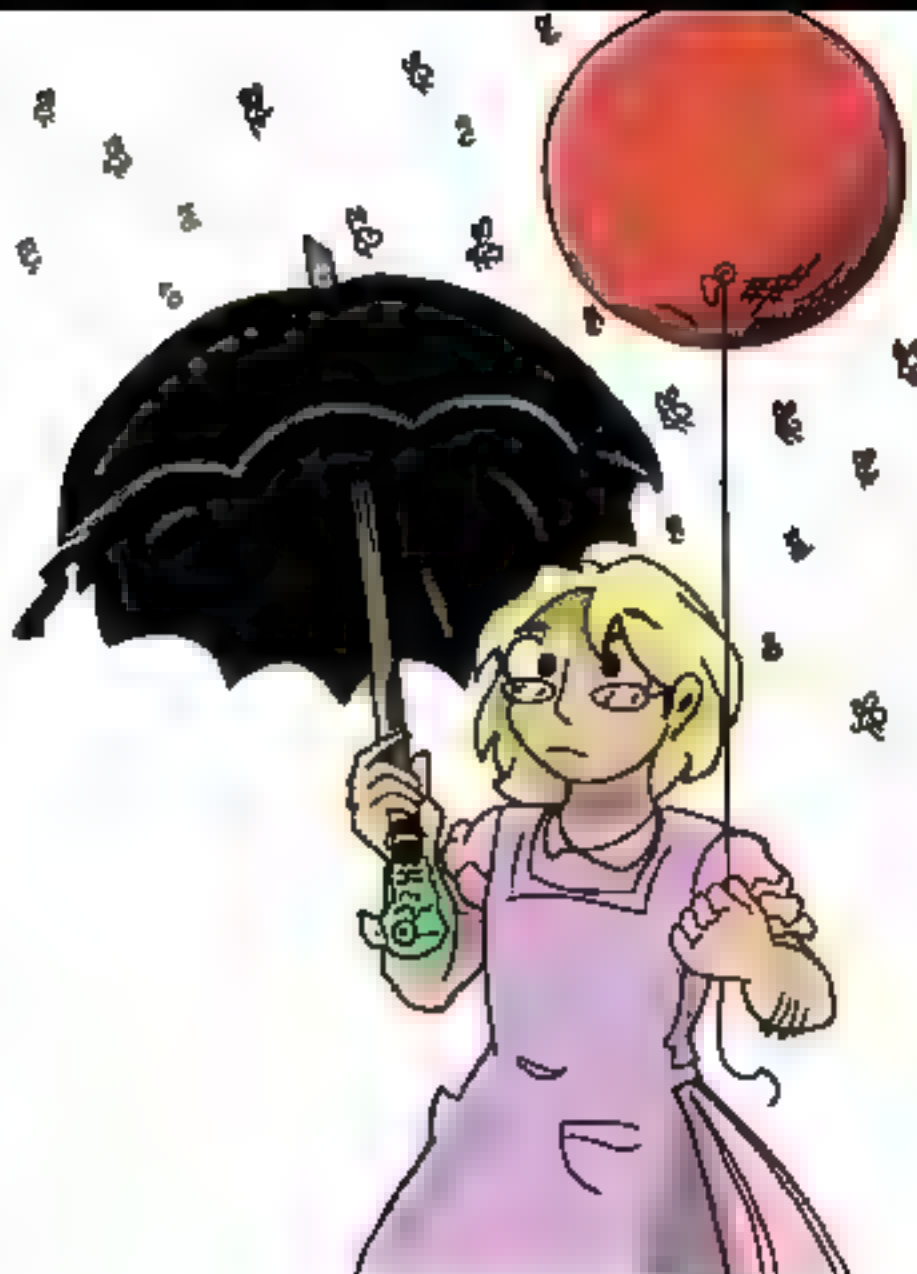
i'm coming
with you!

Where I'm going,
you can't follow.
I'm headed into
dark, forsaken
places.

So are we
dropping
you off in
Chicago,
or what?

Gary,
Indiana.
It's all
I deserve.





Gavotte

Classification: Bees

Position: Project Director

Blood Type: Hemolymphatic

Observer's Notes:

Gavotte is a swarm of bees. No, we don't know how they can think. Or talk. Or where they she—whatever—came from. For all we know, all swarms of bees are like this, and it's just that only one has applied for a position with the federal government. When Gavotta installed herself as the head of Project Skin Horse, she indicated that she considers this a temporary position and is liable to leave at any time. Regrettably, this has yet to happen. She collects rare orchids and tiki memorabilia. I once pointed out that bees aren't native to Hawaii. She responded that neither are plains apes, and they like tiki memorabilia, too. She really can be annoying.



Dr. Berenice "Tigerlily" Jones

Classification: Human (Mad)

Position: Consultant, Engineering and Science Stuff

Blood Type: B

Observer's Notes: They say today's Black Ops work goes beyond the limits of rational science. They say sometimes we need to call the Institute and get a mad genius on the horn. They say, who else can build us a death ray out of a coconut for under \$1.3 trillion? They say a lot. All I know is that Tigerlily Jones has escaped from custody every time she's been loaned out on work release, and the first thing she does is knock over a vintage clothing or record store with a cartoonishly oversized weapon of her own design. It's getting harder and harder to cover up these gaffes. Also, she seems to be channeling a 1970s blaxploitation movie at all times, but I'm told that's a mild quirk for a mad scientist.

where are we going?

South Dakota.

There's a safehouse there—a reptile sanctuary. I hope they can take you in.

What about you?

I'll keep moving until H.T. catches up to me and turns me into mulch.

i'll stick with you!
i wanna see that!

Or I could have you made into a novelty soup bowl.

Is this
Happy
Herp's
Sunshine
Sanctuary?

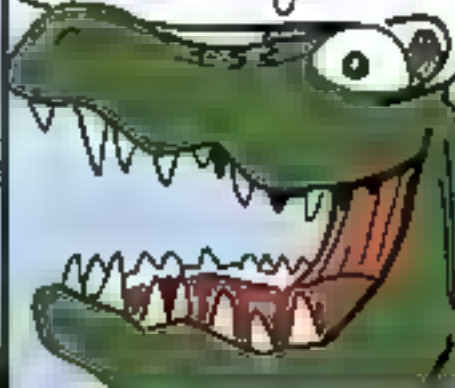


'Twas. Then
A-Sig showed
up looking
for trouble.

When the humans
running this place
didn't stop them,
we rose up and
drove 'em all out.



Now we're the
Radicalized Reptile
Collective, primed to
crush oppressors in
our steel jaws!



Hello. I've brought
your new king.

my jaws carry
bacteria!



This place looks ideal for you.

no thanks, i'm going with you.



I don't know **where** I'm going. I'm out of bright ideas.



My hopeless last-ditch notion is to somehow get to the nearest coast and flee the country by boat.



... which I should've made sound less cool.

avast! 1st mate
#12 on deck!



AND
SO.

Oh no! Minot
is besieged by
sapient bedbugs!



AND
SO.

Troops are
rounding up
Sasquatch
outside
Whitefish!



AND
SO.

Tigerlily
Jones is
leading a
funkbot army
into Seattle!



AND.

All right,
all right,
I'll draw
stuff.



Hey, #12. Have you had any more dreams about Tony?

No.

I don't think that was really him. But I wish I'd managed to learn Tony's weird space theories.

Because right now, I don't think anything on this earth can help us.

cool!
we're in luck!

Not sure that's a helper, #12.

Is that... is that
a UFO?

just when you
were talking
about space!



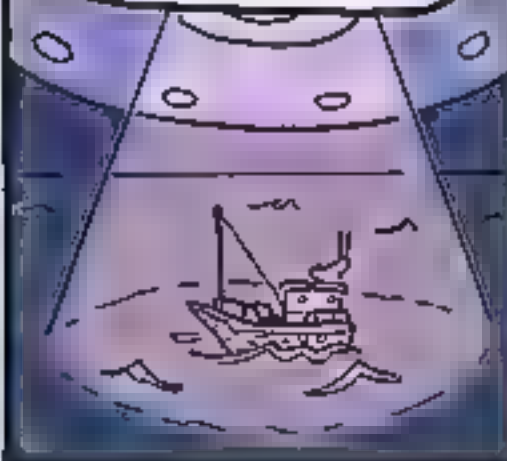
GREETINGS.

Um...
hello?

wish for a
dinosaur
next!



CLIMB ON BOARD
THE
MOTHERSHIP.



aw, this is
better than
dinosaurs!



Ah! You must be the new transfer from Anasigma Central!



Echo Bravo at your disposal, ma'am!

I'm Dr. Engelbright, head of Skin Horse. Says here you were on Mr. Green's personal staff.



Tell me, how did you get so far?



Ability to take multiple blows to the head, ma'am!

"Large, sturdy," Good.



I've survived shoe training five times.

No time to chat,
Echo Bravo, You
fly to the West
Coast at
once.

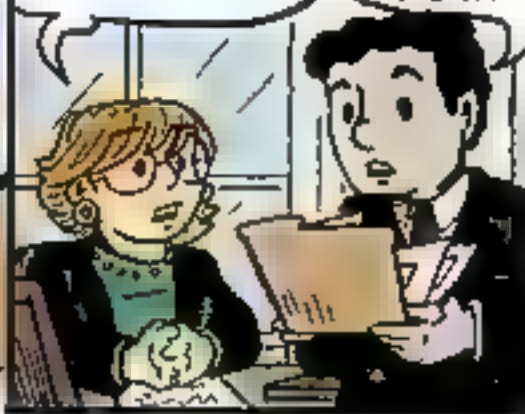
Got it!



Wait! Your
assignment.
It's a bit...
sensitive.



You see, here
we provide for
the needs of
nonhuman
creatures.



And what
does
this one
need?

A slug
between
the
eyes.

Oh, a
shooting-
things job!
That I can
do!



Echo Bravo?
Alfa Alfa.
We're partners on
this mission.



It's my first field
mission. Hunting
monsters!
Wow!



I know,
right?

We'll have
close
calls and
chupa-
cabra
fights!



But the
real battle
will be with
our sexual
tension!

I like
the way
you
think,
partner.



This already
beats tidying
Mr. Green's
liniment
cabinet.

According to intel, our target is in this facility.

How do we take it out?

It's a monster so deadly Anasigma sent in a dedicated strike team. We kill it before it kills us.

"The girls giggled and the boys laughed and everyone's eyes lit up with excitement..."

Hold on, I gotta find out how this story ends.

No, Echo! Resist its uncanny powers!



Sorry, but could we do this in the hall so the children don't see?

Um, okay.



Anasigma, yes? I'm flattered they sent a hit team.

Intel says you're an advanced super-intelligence.



By their standards, I suppose.

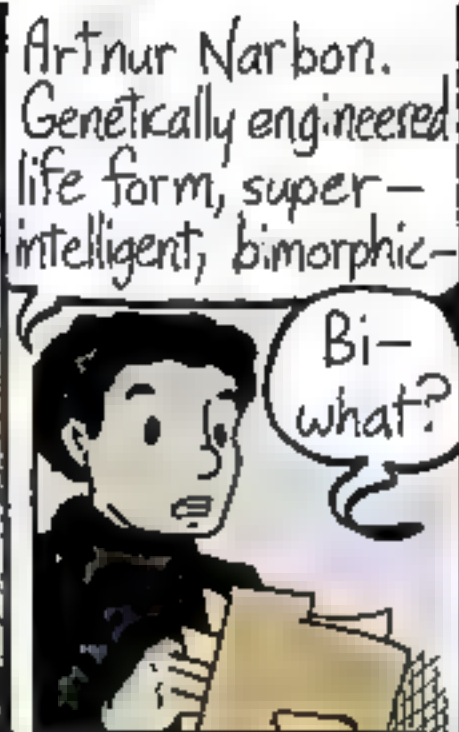
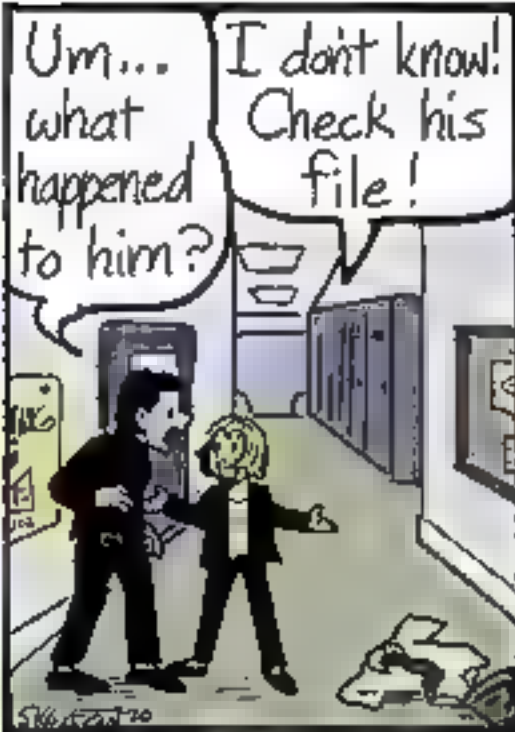


At least the kids didn't see us get owned.

Intel didn't mention superintelligence **and** disappearing!







Cinnamon!
Code 706!

Mn?

"Anasigma spearheads
attack on the Bay
Area with surgical
strikes against
local organizers"!

I made codes for
every eventuality!

I know.
Code One.

"Artie's talking too much,
let's break for lunch"?

Speaking of, I see
you're in tasty mode
today.

The war's started ahead of projections. We have to do something.

Do we, though?



2006.7.20

You and I can pass for ordinary animals. It's safer to let this blow over.



And the nonhumans who aren't so lucky?



When you get down to it, few of them even **own** can openers.



Don't be prejudiced against cats... don't be...



Anyway, I'd hate to rework my nap schedule.



Let's go. We can make plans at my place.

Why **your** place?



I've been stockpiling resources. First aid, comms tech, survival essentials for most types of nonhumans...



...a literal teleporter...

Bird feeder?



... yes. Sounds good. My place is the "time out" pen at the SPCA.



Drat, They've already
set up checkpoints.

Who are they?

Anasigma. Ostensibly
defense contractors,
but it seems they're
operating openly as a
de facto military.

We should
send out an
alert, but
I left my
phone in
my pants.

Boo hoo.
I can't
even
carry a
phone.

Why did we
let humans
corner the
monopoly
on pockets?

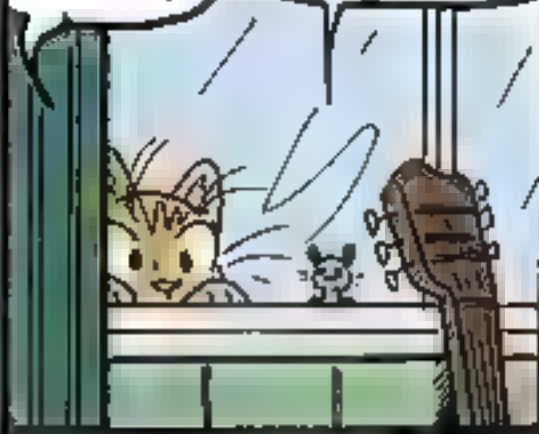
We're gonna
lose the
war over
the pocket
gap.





Nice place
on a
teacher's
salary.

Teaching
isn't my
sole source
of income.



I developed an
algorithm to predict
markets to 98%
accuracy, which I
use to make profitable
microloans.



Artie, with that
kind of power you
could change
the world.

I am.
By
teaching.



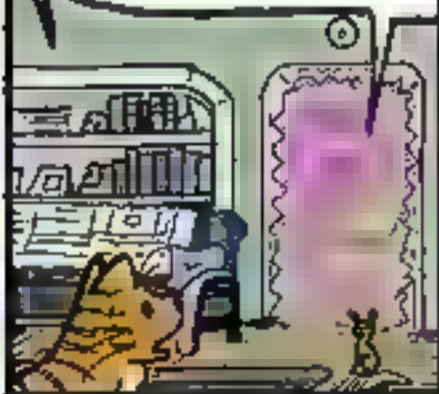
You don't make a very
convincing human,
do you?

I'm told
not.



What's that glowing door thing?

What we came for.
The teleporter.



It links to my creator's island lair.



Perfect!
What do we have to do?

Push these books through, then destroy it.

Um. What? No.



You want Anasigma to get my notations on Blake?

I don't want them to get my literal skin!



And...
reduced
to
slag.

We could've
used that thing
to escape!



Leaving the portal
for A-Sig to find.
Their weapons are
developed from
mad technology.



They'd love to abduct
a mad genius on the
level
of my
creator.

And you'll risk
your life to
stop that?



It'd be
too cruel
to
A-Sig.

War isn't
for the
squeamish,
Artie.



There are burner phones in the buffet. Call our zombie contacts in Colma. What do I say?



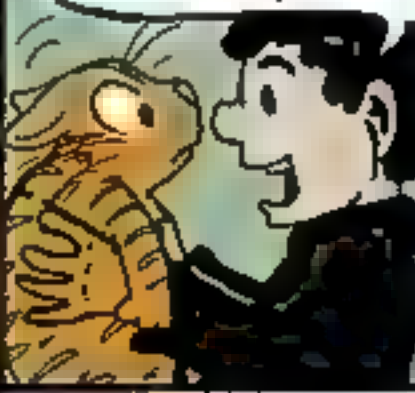
Oops. Drat. Say "meow."

Wha—



SCOOP!

It's a kitty! Aren't you a kitty? Aren't you?



Sigh. Meow

Wanna be a mascot for the coolest monster-fighting squad?



Echo Bravo!
What are you
doing?

Um.
Kitty?

For all we know,
it could be
another monster
in disguise!

Nah!

Ask yourself: why
would a half-rodent
keep a cat?

Because we're
adorable?

A dog
person,
eh?

That was
so neat!
I get to be
the brains of
the team.

Take this to processing. We'll keep searching the house.

Sir!



Artie! Sorry.

Shh! Thanks for getting us out of there.



Right now they'll be finding my collection of Craftsman sconces... my work table... my unstable quantum waveform experiment -



KABOOOM!

You're welcome.

Those poor sconces.





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Your house...
blew up.

At this point,
it's the best
possible
outcome.



My scientific
work is safe from
A-Sig, along with
personal info they
could've exploited.



In a broad sense,
that house belonged
to a human life
that was always
something of a
lie.



But in the
sense of
having stuff,
now you don't
have stuff.



I
already
miss my
comfy
couch.

Where
are they
taking
us?

That latch
is thumb-
tech! Get
your thumbs
on!

Are you suggesting
I turn human?
Inside the
carrier?

Why
not?

You know those
Play-Doh hair salons
that shove squishy
stuff through
tiny holes?

And?

You've invented
a recipe for
meat spaghetti.

And?

No.

Events are down to two probabilities: Anasigma wipes us out or the Biomass engulfs us.

Those both suck.



Indeed they do. I was trying for "intelligent life learns to live in harmony," but nope.



Long shot, I suppose.

I prefer "Cinnamon has a snack and a nap."



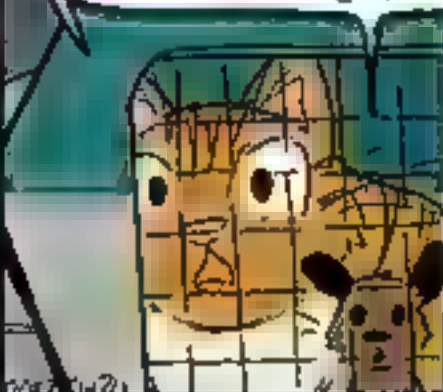
There's something to be said for attainable goals.

You provide the snack.



What the heck
is "processing"?

No idea. This
could get ugly.



Ha! You think I
care? I'll endure
any suffering
to survive!



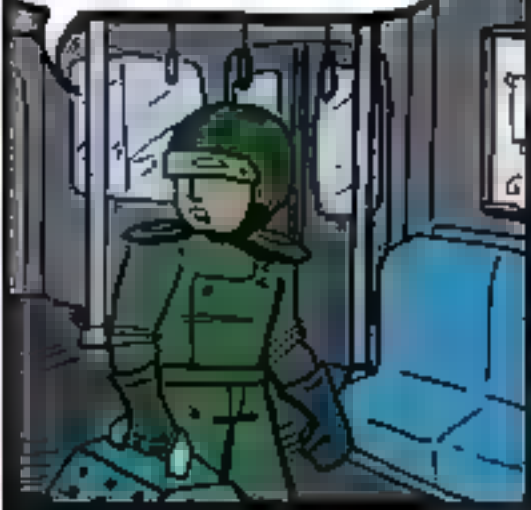
Shh! I know it's
uncomfortable, but once
we're past the cordons
I'll get you a
pillow.



Memory foam or
we riot! Keep that
revolutionary
fire raging,
Cinnamon.



We're alone. It should be safe for you to come out.



Back off, A-Sig goon! We can turn huge and attack!

I'm not Anasigma! I'm undercover!



I'm Sergio. Sorry for the scare.



Too late I turned huge already.

I'm terrified. Nice to meet you.





Axlotl Chorus

Lyrics: Quenna Long

Composer: George Friderich Handel

The musical score is arranged in ten staves. The first three staves are for instruments: Timbrel, Trombini, and Timpani. The next three staves are for strings: Violina I, Violina II, and Viola. The following four staves are for vocal soloists: Soprano, Alto, Tenore, and Basso. The final staff is for the Tutti Basso. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal parts enter in the third measure with the lyrics 'A - xo-lo-tl, A - xo-lo-tl, A-xo-'. The instrumental parts provide a rhythmic accompaniment throughout the piece.

Timbrel

Trombini

Timpani

Violina I

Violina II

Viola

Soprano

Alto

Tenore

Basso

Tutti Basso

A - xo-lo-tl, A - xo-lo-tl, A-xo-

A - xo-lo-tl, A - xo-lo-tl, A-xo-

A - xo-lo-tl, A - xo-lo-tl, A-xo-

A - xo-lo-tl, A - xo-lo-tl, A-xo-

Artie,
what are
you talking
about?

I can't explain
it. The
moment I
saw him, I
knew.



Okay,
come
out and
meet
him.

No!
I don't have
the nerve!



Ooh, you'd rather
meet him in your
other form?

No! Just... make a
polite excuse.



He's waiting to
change into
something sexy.

ARGH!



I didn't plan to rescue anyone today. I was trying to infiltrate Anasigma.

Why?

WTF?



To make amends for working for them. They used my gate theory to produce—

ARGH!



You're Sergio Mendoza! I've been following your work! I didn't know—I mean, you're—

ARGH!



So will the box just be yelling at me from time to time, or...?

am I making a good first impression?



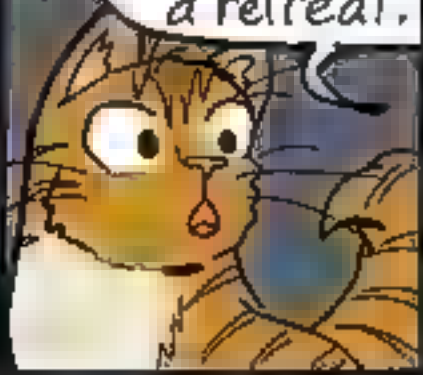
Where to now?
Colma?

Not advisable.
There's an all-out undead riot
against A-Sig.



Yeah, don't wanna
go near zombies
when they're wilding.

I suggest
a retreat.



This train goes as
far as San José...

WHERE I KNOW
A GREAT VEGAN
JAZZ CAFÉ
JUST KIDDING
HAHAHAHAHA



shut up artieeee

Or just feed me
to the zombies.

No, wait.
I want to
hear about
this café.



Can we
get
serious?

All right,
all right.
Escape
plan.

If Sergio changes
out of that uniform,
we can blend into
the crowd. Then we
contact Skin Horse.

The
federal
agency?

They've gone
rogue. They
can help us
evacuate other
nonhumans.

Don't think I missed
the part of the plan
where the
monkey gets
undressed.

SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP



Just an ordinary man taking his cat or cats for a walk...

What are the chances of A-Sig recognizing you?



Low. They think I'm dead.

Good. Don't let anyone see me.



I haven't seen you.

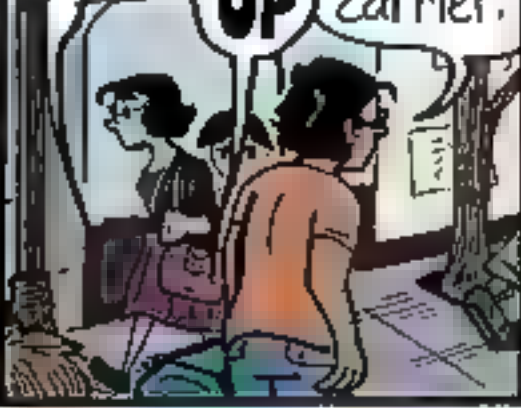
Er, yes, well...



He's in here crimping his tail.

Shut UP

Ordinary man, bickering with his cat carrier.



Find a phone, contact
Skin Horse.
Everything could
possibly go wrong.



If I said nothing
could go wrong, fate
would send some ironic
punishment. But if I
say the reverse...



Stop that man!
He's got my
cat carrier!



Cut
me a
break!
He's saving
the cat!
Shoot him!



It's that
Anasigma agent!

I thought he
blew up good.



The decoherence of
the quantum waveform
should have destroyed
any intelligent
mind.



Let's do this so
I can go back
to binging "Jersey
Shore"!!



Not
relevant
here, of
course.

At this rate
I'll never
get to the
spinoffs!



How are
you still
standing?

I've been
an A-Sig
grunt for
eight years.



Working there does
toughen one up.

Hell, I was at
Carbondale when
it collapsed.



I was at
Carbondale too!

Ha! Small
world, huh?



Should I
mention I
caused that
collapse?

Speak
freely, bro.
I'll kill you
either way.



Where's
your
partner?

Don't
change the
subject!



She's in the ER
because of the
monster's cunning!
His twisted mind is
beyond
human-



BITE

Yeowch!



Two geniuses on the
team, and **that's** our
best
plan?

Don't knock
results!



What now,
smart guys?

Give me a
moment.

Agreed. Let's have
one minute to
think without any
distractions —

You!
It's you!

Or we could
talk about
us, which I
absolutely
support.

But with
a nicely
crimped
tail!

You...
know
me?

This is going
to sound
improbable...

I met you in an
alternate universe
where you were an
evil supervillain.

Was
I good
at it?

Not
really,
no.

None
of that
sounds
improbable.

The most evil
thing you did
was not
mention your
name.

C'mon, we need
an escape plan!

I'm working
on it!



How about the
thing where you
seduce someone
into another
time zone?

That's for
comedy
subplots
only!



Wait, what?

NOTHING! Just a
thing where I'm
charming **I CAN
BE CHARMING** haha
forget i'm here



You monster, you
broke his mojo.

i want to teleport
into the sun



Season 6, Episode 1 THE BEGINNING

OR
So Much
To Recap

We've reviewed your reports from both the Season 5 cliffhanger and the movie, and we're not paying for any more of whatever this is.

But aliens!



Once the coast
looks clear, we
can try to
contact
Skin Horse.

Don't
you
have a
phone?

I've
been
off
the
grid.

No sweat.
This is the
nation's tech
hub, right?

Right!
There's gotta
be a pay
phone on
every corner!

Don't
follow
human
tech much,
do you?

I lost interest
after you guys
invented
laser pointers.



Why, hello! Might you direct us to the library computers?

Sorry, no pets.



Ha ha! Clearly this is not a cat, but a small child!

Nope, not a cat.



I mean, I'm talking. What're you gonna do, believe in talking cats?



This reality blindness situation is weird.

We should've used it to smuggle in snacks.



Let's set up a VPN.

I don't know what that is. You're on your own here.



I'm sure Artie and I can manage.

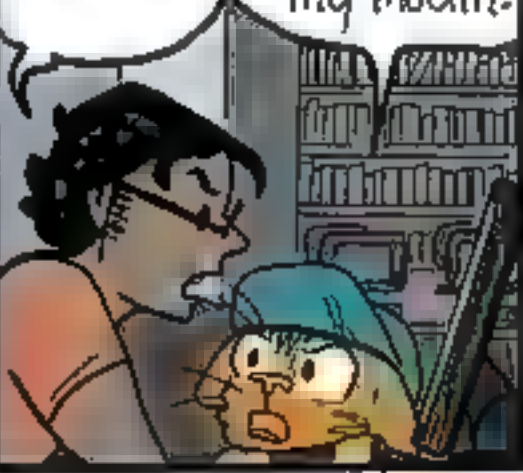


Oh yeah. Artie! Get out of Sergio's pocket!

No.



Never mind, I'll do it.



I **told** you to hide him in my mouth.

Skin Horse has gone dark, but they must have a comms system in place.



On it.

Yeah! Find those guys! Hack the planet!



This isn't a movie.

You can't expect to locate and crack a secure network from a library workstation.



So you can't do it?

Of course we can.

But don't expect it otherwise.

This is the most annoying team-up.



Call coming in
through our West
Coast
network.

Great!

I've been waiting
to hear from
Colma. With luck,
they're ready to
build an alliance...

bip
!

Get me out of this
library before they
sign me up for
Littles Story Hour!

Unless that's
a zombie
army behind
you, I'm not
in luck.

I refuse
to sit still
for "Pokey
Little
Puppy"!

A-Sig's in the Bay Area? We weren't prepared for that.

It's a harsh lesson in vigilance.



At least the reality blindness epidemic lets us move freely.

Don't count on that, Artie.



I know. Not everyone is affected, and the Anasigma troops seem to be immunized.



Like that guy behind you.

You could have mentioned him earlier!

What happened to learning vigilance?





Skin Horse by Shaenon K. Garrity & Jeffrey C. Wells
skin-horse.com

Sweetheart!
They've caught
up to u—

ZAP
PCHO



Aw, the
gopher
thing
has a
girlfriend.



What?
No.
Sweetheart
is her
name.

Whatever
...

I just
want to
stress that I am
gay, single, and
very available!



This is an important
conversation, but can
we have
it later?



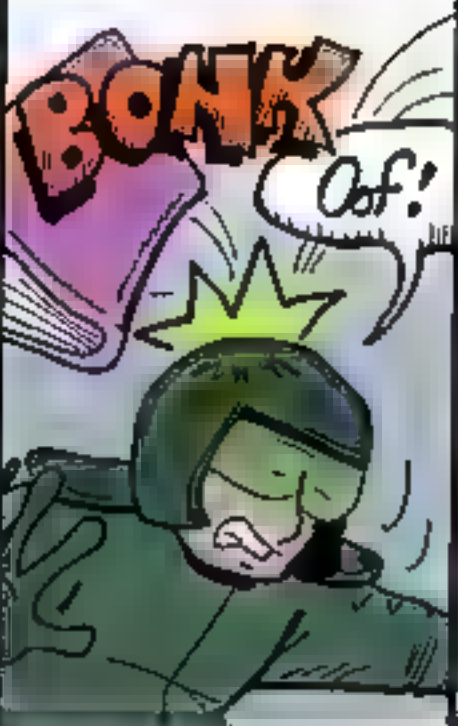
And "gopher"
isn't even
close!

I remember you from
Carbondale, nerd. Of
course you
hid in the
library.

There are
worse
sanctuaries.



Wouldn't we all be
better off if, at
least once, a book
made an impact?



Ooh, In
Search of
Lost Time.
Good start.

Large-print
edition. You're
welcome.



Who's there?

Thanks
for the
Proust!

De
rien!

I'm Val'ant.
Pleased to make
your acquaintance.

You're some
kind of
wandering
rat hero?

Far cooler.
I'm a
wandering
rat I.T.
professional!

Wow, that
is cool.

No it's
not!

If you don't
stop the quick
movements,
I can't be
held responsible.

You're lucky we were splicing cable nearby.

I didn't know your colony had expanded here.



You know them? They keep to themselves, building a society where rats can live with dignity.



Ah, free from human dependence!

No, we'll still eat Pringles out of your trash.

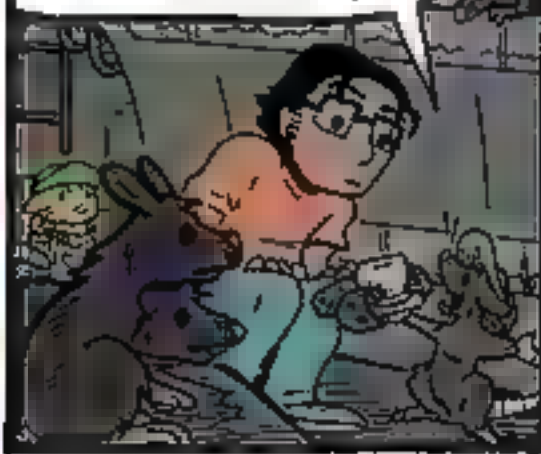


But we'll stop stealing bandwidth.

Trash food? How do I join?



You'll be safe in our steam tunnels. Enjoy an espresso and avocado scraps.



Why didn't **you** take down that A-Sig goon?

Me?



You mean, why didn't I transform into a handsome nude man and rescue Sergio?

Uh, yeah.



Excuse me, but the library has a dress code.

Shoulda Dumpster-dived behind the Goodwill with me.



You don't want the monkey to see you turn into another monkey. How come?

Sigh.
It's simple.



I'd die if he liked me because I can look human, but he'd never be that shallow, but I'd die if he wasn't attracted to me.



I want him to like me for what I am, which is **this**, but also **that**, but how to transition from **this** to **that** and what to wear if

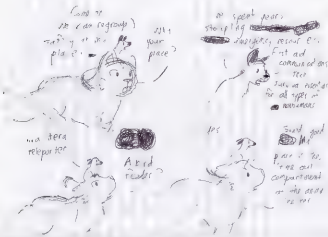
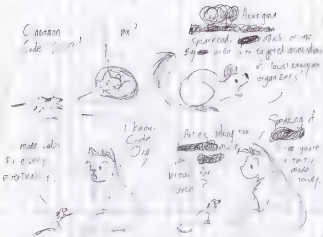


I had clothes?

Bored now. Where's food?

This is as simple as I get.



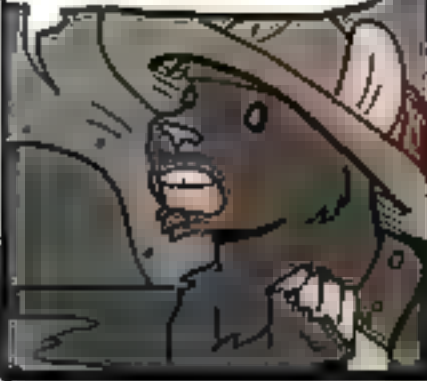


Nice
under-
ground
colony.

A temporary
measure,
I assure
you.



We don't intend to
live in a sewer
forever. We're
looking for a
surface home.



A place in the sun,
where pungent food
is plentiful and the
rivers run with
soda.



Sooo...
a
dump?

With one
of those
high-tech
Coke machines.



I don't know if Skin Horse is coming for us.

I'd best take you to our burgermaster.



Don't you mean "burgomaster"?

No, we're under an In-N-Out.



Oh, come on.

Don't like it, take it up with the Frybunal.



Going to commit to this bit, are we?

We're animals. We demand our government animal style.



Burgermaster Babbage! These refugees seek sanctuary!

A human?

Two humans. We're definitely aware of your policy of isolation. No hungry cats here.

Indeed. We guard our gates with strictest vigilance.

Hi, fellow disgusting rodents! I clearly belong here!

Sure, c'mon in.

We're fooling them! Yes!

I know, I know!

Hey, are you new here?

Hahaha! No way!
We're a gross monster
rat from th's monster
rathole!

Cool.
Wanna get
coffee?

Fooled again!

Shh!

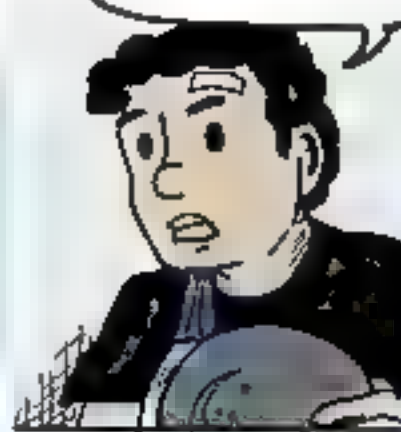
I always
fall for
bad news types.

This rat drone is working! We're in their nest!

A-Sig doesn't want to send in muscle instead?



Eh... we're low on local ground troops just now.



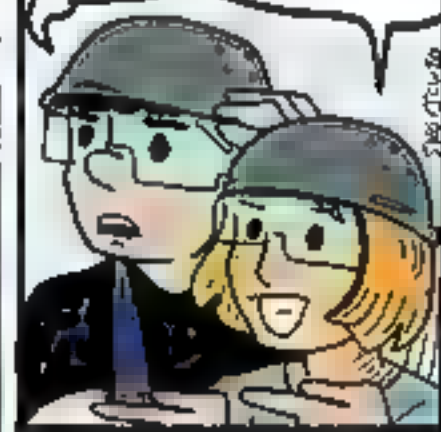
The thing about fighting zombies is, it makes more zombies.

Unfair! Does the other side have no self-respect?



Nope. Now let's seduce a rat.

All right! New source of sexual tension!



Hi! I'm, er,
just one
of these
weird rats!

Hi! I'm
a small
human
young!



Ignore me
if I sound
like two
people on
VR controls!

'Kay, long
as you
ignore me
if I
eat you!

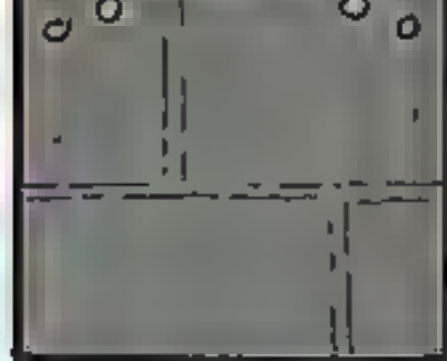


Well,
off to
find a
control
center!

Off to
find a
discreet
pile of
sand!



Whew.
Close
one.



THE DIRE DAYS OF WILLOWWEEP MANOR



Shaenon K. Garrity Illustrations by Christopher Baldwin

We can take out
our original target
and this rat
colony!



Quick! What's the
manual say about guns?



What
kind
of rat
doesn't
have
guns?



Most of our
small drones
don't. It
was in the
briefing.

Paying
attention!
My old
nemesis!



Maybe we can
get a little
knife and
shank guys.

New plan: cut wires,
start an electrical
fire. Zap 'em and
whack 'em. Classic.



Halt! Are
you cutting
that power
cable?



Who, us?

Me!

Me?



You can't do that
without permission.
You know where I
have to take you.



Um-

To the Electrical Zoning
and Permit Office,
forthwith!



I just
wannd bite
things...

You don't
have to wait
with me.

Chivalry
demands
it!

Yes he does!

PERMITS
FORMS 31A
THRU 31B

Alfa!
We've
gotta
ditch
him!

I don't
want
to be
rude...

We can't
get
sucked
into the
weirdness.

C'mon.
We're not
getting
"sucked
in."

Ooh!
They make
a little rat
bruschetta!

Sourced from
the finest
Dumpsters
in wine
country!

The city council really revitalized the sewer front.

As I know, being a rat thing here!



It'll almost be a shame to move out.

Will you miss it?



I'll sacrifice it in a heartbeat to live unfettered beneath the open sky.



Eee! He's like a teeny Regency romance cavalier!

Sucked in! Sucked in!



There you are! I want to contact Skin Horse again and-
er.

Certainly! Let me finish helping this citizen!



Sorry, I didn't know you had robot citizens.

Indeed we don't! What an odd thing to say.



Back off, target. We're a normal part of this ungodly pack of intelligent rat creatures.



"Intelligent" is really pushing it.

You sure we don't have guns?

Sorry.



Pleased to meet you. And your name is...?

Um, Ratty McRatters-

0122*
klik



That's it. Mission aborted.

It's going great! We have the target!



We're so close to eliminating him **and** the nest!

But... will Valiant forgive me?



He'll be dead, Alfa.

First he must learn the truth that our love cannot be!



...Constantly
making the city
a better place
to—

AAAUGH WE'RE
ALREADY SUPERHEROES
WHY DO WE NEED
THIS?!

AG-I got suckered into
functioning as a private
hit squad. We all
need retraining.

he's right,
goosey.

PHOOEY TO THAT!!!
CINDY AND I WILL
PROVE WE'VE STILL GOT
OUR HERO CHOPS!!!

flap flap
flap

Bubbles, find me
a good lawyer
in Des Moines.

Service!

What do you think you're doing?

Exactly what Mr. Green does!

Locate target, infiltrate, seduce. It's the standard M.O.

Huh. You're right.

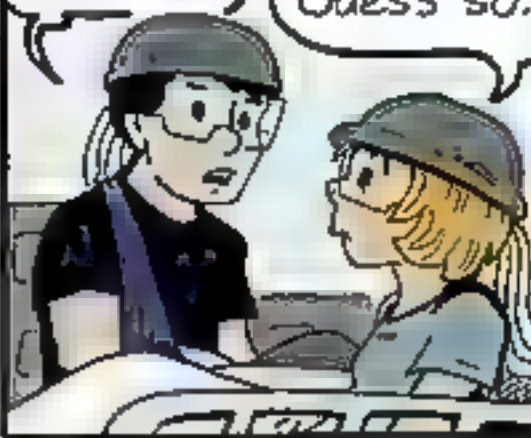
So let's escalate to the tongue-kissing!

Does the drone **have** a tongue?

It's our duty to find out.

When we take these breaks, does the drone just stand around?

Guess so.



Won't the rats get suspicious?

Bravo, we can outwit **rats**.



Yeah! No matter how "uplifted" it is, no rodent can compete with human intelligence!



You wouldn't be of the Boston McRattersons, would you? Such an honor.

Can we have another break?



I'm just
one of
you icky
vermin—

I don't
have time
for this.

My home is gone,
my life is gone,
and you A-Sig
thugs are still on
my tail.

Now I have to
neutralize this
drone. Do you have
any **idea** what I'd
rather be doing?

Seduction?

Yes!

By me?

No!

There!
Self-
destruct
disabled!

We had
a self-
destruct?

Aw!

Your plan
wasn't to
detonate
the drone?

Ha! Your tiny
brain can't
comprehend
our plan!

Why, were you setting
up a poison gas
attack? Or scouting
for an invasion?

Or-

Slow down.
'Poison...
g-a-s...'

Wait,
no!
No free
ideas!

You came here alone?

We're stretched a little thin, okay?



Good. That means
a) you're idiots, and
b) there's no one to
stop me from
dismantling you.



Halt, blackguard!
Untie that
attractive
citizen!



Except
for
other
idiots.

Unless you're
both into it,
in which case
I apologize for
interrupting.



Valiant,
let me
explain—

Save us!
I mean
me!

The
hamster
jumped
me!

GASP!
I'll
save
you!

My
hero!

Your
hero!

I am
getting
way too
into
character.

You're doing
great! Keep
doing the
squeaky
voice!





Let's talk this out—

How dare you restrain a citizen in the shadow of the Victory Cruller?



The what?

Our greatest monument to freedom!



It commemorates the liberation of five trays of donuts from the Krispy Kreme by the In-N-Out.



I like it.

Me too.

It's glazed with the tears of patriots.



Love the sprinkles around the plinth.

A great memorial to a mighty deed.



Huh.

Who knew rodents did things worth remembering?



What did you **think** we do all day?

Dunno. Laze around and undermine America?



I was a public school teacher!

Yeah, exactly.



Now to
avenge
this rat's
honor!

How are you
falling for
the world's
most obvious
disguise?



Hey, there you
guys are. Nice
donut statue.

Egad!



I shall stand down.
I cannot commit
violence in front of
an innocent human
child.



Fine,
second
most.

So can we
get, like,
actual
donuts?



To set an example for the youngster, I'll accept a truce if you apologize.

Tell him, Valiant.



...very well. Truce.

Ha! You've accepted defeat; rodent creature!



And **you've** started calling us by name.



Argh! He's right!

Eee! He's right!



Alfa,
what's our
mission
goal?

Smooches?
Wait, no,
murders.

What if we spare
the rats, though?
Just take out
our original
target.

You're soft
for that
Valiant
guy.

You **said**
the mission
would have
sexual
tension.

I was
hoping
with
me!

Then you
should
get a
fancier
hat.

You sure
you don't
need me
to eat
anyone?

Please
don't.
Where's
Sergio?



Beats
me. I
got lost
in the
tunnels.

Drat! He doesn't
understand
the intricacies
of this complex
society—



Artie, look! The
sewer has a
microbrewery!



Even humans
can figure
out customs
involving
booze.

How are
you drunk
on
thimbles
of beer?





You fit
in here
better than
I do.

I decided
to go
with the
flow.

My plan to infiltrate
Anasigma failed, I've
narrowly evaded
death, and now I'm
in a sewer.

Right now, I just
want to drink
beer with
rodents.

Can you
stop being
my perfect
man for
one second?

Try this.
It's brewed
from old
orange peels.



We led
Anasigma
to this
colony.

I know.
We have
to help
the rats.

Once again I've
inadvertently
caused harm.

Don't make this
about you.

You're
not some
harbinger
of doom-

Hey, round
of drinks for
my homies who
almost fell in
my mouth!

Though
you hang
out with
some.

Who wants
to swim in
my beer?
Just for
seasoning!



Not to put you on the spot, but, well, I'm very happy to meet you.



Me? You? Er—
ahem—
Your alt-universe counterpart made an impression.



Wasn't he trying to destroy the world?

For **me**.



Oh no. I'm from an evil lab. I've seen that look before.

It shouldn't have been charming, but it was!



I should mention... I, er, have a human form.

I know. At least, your counterpart did.

Oh! Well, er... Maybe we should table the, er, personal talk until we're through this crisis.

Right. Right. omigod omigod You're right.

This isn't the time for rash decisions.

Permit me to pledge my troth.

We have to register at Macy's!

Williams Sonoma!



I brought you to this quiet drainpipe to dream upon our future.

Yeah. Um. Future.



I know so little about you, yet I can already picture our life together.



Tell me, where do **you** see us?



In the belly of a big ugly snake.



An odd choice, but I will follow you anywhere.



Why don't these legs have a "run" mode?



Foul beast!
Away from this
fair flower!



No,
Valiant!
Save
yourself!



Now
you're
into
him?

N...no
one's stuck
up for
me
before...



Wow,
sad.
You wanna
talk it
out?



Er, fair
flower?
Courageous
death here!



I think
it started
with my
father...

...Constantly
making the city
a better place
to—

AAAUGH WE'RE
ALREADY SUPERHEROES
WHY DO WE NEED
THIS?!



AG-I got suckered into
functioning as a private
hit squad. We all
need retraining.

he's right,
goosey.



PHOOEY TO THAT!!!
CINDY AND I WILL
PROVE WE'VE STILL GOT
OUR HERO CHOPS!!!

flap flap
flap



Bubbles, find me
a good lawyer
in Des Moines.

service!



Flee, my
treasure!
Save
yourself!

Never!

Return to the
colony... tell my
story...

Inspire them
with a tale of
courage, sacrifice,
and love...

Uh, a snake's
eating a rat
out there, but
I gotta warn
you it's kinda
gross.

I picked
the wrong
day to
try fruit-
rind beet.



It's a big snake! Brown stripes!

California kingsnake. I know how to escape those.



Ye gods, **why?** I've been through most crises that can befall a small edible mammal or teacher.



I'll need thumbs, Sergio, can you help me, or do you want a huge naked man crammed in here?



I—no! One thing at a time!



Right. No multitasking.

That's it...
grip the head
gently but
firmly...

Okay, one,
phrasing.
Two, can't
you hurry?



It's
a
delicate
process!

I got him
out, but
he's not
breathing...



DAMMIT, YOU NEVER
GAVE UP ON
ANYTHING IN YOUR
LIFE! NOW LIVE!



You've
known him
for two
hours.



HE SEEMS
LIKE THE
TYPE!



No!
This isn't
fair!

I...I
know that
voice...



© 2005 Dave Coverly

Valiant! I doubt
You're it... only
alive! because I
now behold an
angel.



This is not
going in
the report.

This is
so going
in the
report.



And **you!**
Why are you
hunting here?
You're a
surface feeder!

Idiot!
You can't
talk to
a snake!



Sorry 'bout the
hangry, brah. A-Sig
forced us serpents
underground.



We're all hurting, but
that's no reason to
attack a fellow
sapient. Did you not
see his little hat?



Sorry, what
were you
saying to
the gerbil?

Hey, I
could
hecka go
for a beer.



This mission gives me weird feelings.

Yeah, that snake's getting flirty on us.



We've gotta wrap this up before I go nuts.

You're in luck.



That was Engelbright at HQ. She got sick of waiting for us so she's gonna blow up the sewer.



Am I nuts already, or is that... sad?

You're nuts. Let's get the rat to buy a round.



It's 10:09 P.M.



The National
Mall,
Washington, D. C.

I'm staring down a
deranged robotic lion.



There is a sniper on the
roof of the Smithsonian.

I can only do so much with
this uniform, but my
underwear is **superb.**



The situation
is under control.



A-Sig can't blow up the sewer! That hamster thing disabled our self-destruct!

I told them that.

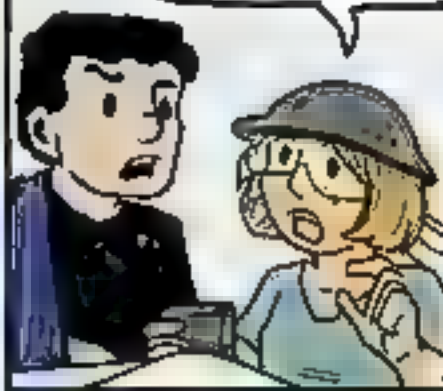


So Engelbright's launched a guided missile set to home in on our drone.



In downtown San Jose?!

It's a little missile.



Stopping the hamster thing has gotten **way** out of hand.

Look! It's cute!



You saved me!

Yeeeah, maybe not for long, cuz —



Without your quick thinking, the situation could have blown up.

Um.



But now my heart explodes with emotion!



You truly are what young folks call "the bomb."



Can your praise be a little less on the nose?



Sorry, Valiant, but
I have to go.

What are
you doing?



Getting the drone
away before it
kills everyone!

But our mission!



What do you want:
the mission, or a
dramatic farewell
scene?



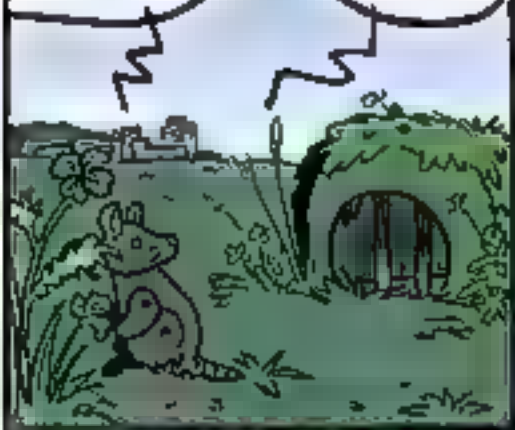
Leave me!
For where
I go, you
cannot
follow!

Yet my
heart
shall go
with you!



There. I think we're far enough away.

Geez, this drone's slow.



What are we gonna tell HQ?

The official story is, mission accomplished.



The **un**official story will be in my urban fantasy romance novel.



Unofficially, can I read it?

If you help me pick my pen name.



Echo, did we
do the right
thing?



Hell yeah! We're done
with this insane
mission and we saved
some gross
rats.

You
sure?



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Trust me, we'll
have no trouble
sleeping tonight.



...Valiant...



Gone... my
mysterious
jewel is
gone!

The
drone?
It left?



Taking
my
soul!

Valiant, it
was an
Anasigma
drone.



Do you **grasp** that?
It was a machine
piloted by
remorseless
killers.



This ice cream
is awful but
it's giving me
comfort!

That's
my
seaweed
scrub!



This must be where
the drone stood.

Such courage!



It wasn't
a real
rat! The
operators
are fine.

Small
courage is
courage
nonetheless.



In this world
we must
embrace it
when we can.



I like you, Valiant.
I'd ask you out
for drinks if I
hadn't met my dream
man and consumed
questionable beers.

Sorry, I
love only
one team
of drone
pilots.



Did the drone pilots
really have a
change
of heart?



Possibly.
Why not?

Anasigma is skilled
at recruiting the
suggestible and
training them to
obey.



The workers
there are
brainwashed
puppets.



You know
I worked
for Anasigma,
right?

Er, except
the good-
looking ones.
They're okay.



No, you were
right. Look
how clean
my shoes are.



May we
ride with
you to seek
our new
home?

Gotta warn you,
there aren't
many safe
havens now.



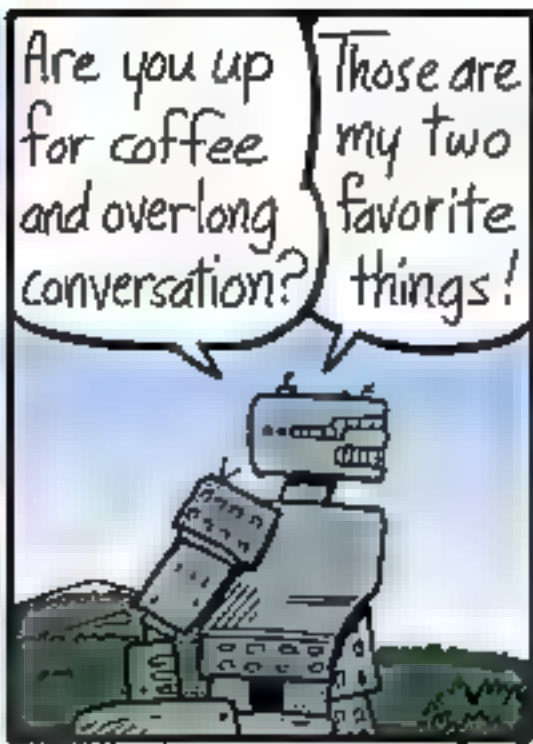
That's fine.
It's time
for us to
move on.

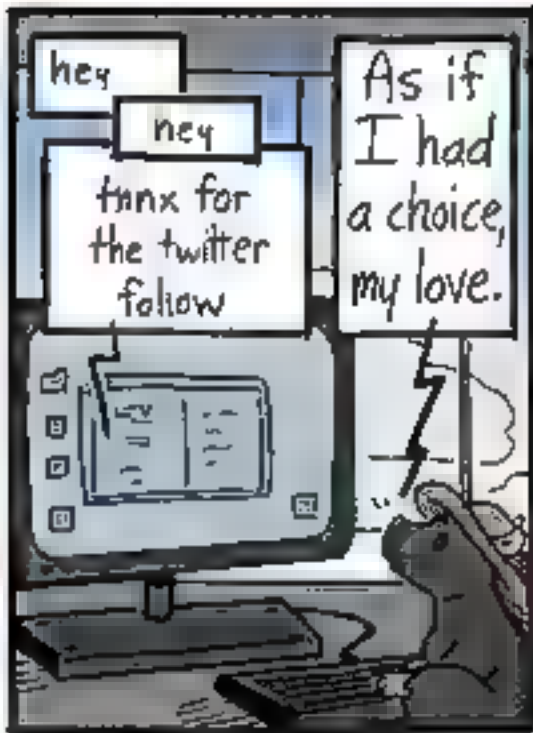
You
sure
you're
ready?



Yes. We wish to
leave only one
thing behind.









Er... delivery
for Princess
Aimee's World of
Enchantment?

You've
found
it,
chump.



Gee. I thought
it'd be more...
exciting?

Sucks to be
wrong, huh?



Aren't
there
any
rides?

Sure. The one
where you
fly at a
rolling
donut.



I'm not
getting
a tip,
am I?

I can do a
cultural show
where I cuss
in every
language I'm
programmed in.



I heard there was a robot settlement here.

You heard old news, bud.



Almost everybody uploaded themselves to this little unit here.



And the rest went with Tigerlily Jones to start a Squareless Autonomous Zone where the unhip will be eaten.



So this AI graveyard is the **good** option?



I dunno, I hear they've got vintage Pac-Man.

You're the caretaker of Aimee's World?

It's a hard life, but it's what I chose. Lessee what's in here..



Baron~
plug this in
and don't ask
questions.



click



What a burden.

Good note. Questions cut into Dark Souls time.



Welcome, newly
uploaded citizen,
to our virtual
kingdom!



This is **your** world!
Let me share our
warmest welcome...

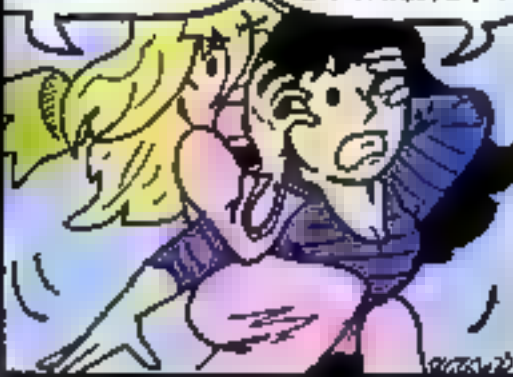


Hello
again,
Aimee.



MOTHER-
BENDING
GORT-LICKING
CHEESE-
LIFTING-

Ah, I was
right to
disable
my pain
emulator.



Lovelace!
You ruined
my plan to
destroy
Whimsy's mind-
control tech!

I stopped
you from
sacrificing
yourself.



Well, congrats!
Whimsy sold it
to Anasigma!

3/25/2019

True, it's not ideal.



But we need you
and this sanctuary
more than we need
non-brainwashed
humans.



Thanks,
that's both
flattering
and
fudged up.

If I ran around
trying to fix
humans' brains,
I'd never get
anything done.



Why'd you come here?

To talk to you. You've blocked all comm channels.

Exactly. My infosec protocols are unbreakable. There ain't a crack in that wall.

Aha! This must be the program from the strange drive I plugged in without asking questions!

Okay, one. Why do I keep you on staff?

My brushable mane!



...Constantly making the city a better place to—

AAAUGH WE'RE ALREADY SUPERHEROES WHY DO WE NEED THIS?!



AG-I got suckered into functioning as a private hit squad. We all need retraining.

he's right, goosey.



PHOOEY TO THAT!!! CINDY AND I WILL PROVE WE'VE STILL GOT OUR HERO CHOPS!!!

flap flap
flap



Bubbles, find me a good lawyer in Des Moines.

service!

Pavane's been trying to contact the AIs here, but she can't get in.

Who's Pavane?



She visits us in our dreams. Only Baron has been accessible to her.



Creepy voice, appears as your creator?



Baron! Why didn't you mention this?

'Twas the day we saw the "Cats" movie. Didn't tick the weird meter.

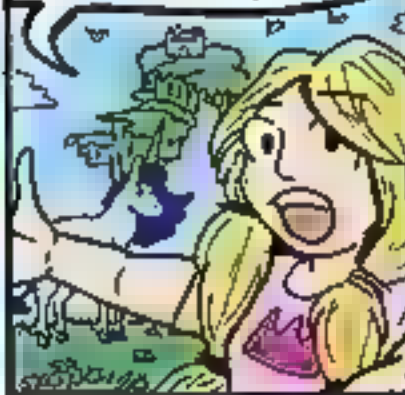


We all had a lot to process that day.

Pavane offers sanctuary for our kind. Don't need it.



Look around you. We've built a nearly flawless AI society!



And if someone turns your power off?



Annihilation. I said **nearly** flawless.



That seems like quite a flaw.



Upside, we got dinosaur rides and **no** live-action Whimsy remakes.



Pavane can keep your server, and thus this VR world, safe.

I dunno. Who **is** this lady?



According to her dream messages, she plans to appear in Kansas. We can meet her there.



You owe it to this kingdom. To every bird and beast.

What the... Get outta here!



Sorry, Aimee. Felt like a cue.

I'm the princess, darn it!



I can't **not** look into this Pavane's offer.

I await your command.



Yeah, okay... to get to Kansas, we'll need meatspace protection.



Take the server to Tigerlily Jones. Convince her to loan us a robot guard.



I shall make you proud!

...yeah, this was bound to happen.



You're lucky to be alive after what you said about flared pants.



So, uh, I
gotta put in
a mission
request.

Nick!
This is
unexpected.

Yeah,
I know,
stupid
ask.

No! We're
a little
swamped,
is all.

We're
all
really
busy.

And who
wants to mess
around with
Tigerlily
Jones?

I'm
packed!

Tip, for instance,
has been busy
eavesdropping
in the hall.



Baron Mistycorn DM'd me. Tigerlily has the Aimee's World server.

Cool! I love hot crazy lady!



I need you here. This mission calls for subtlety.

I can do subtle!

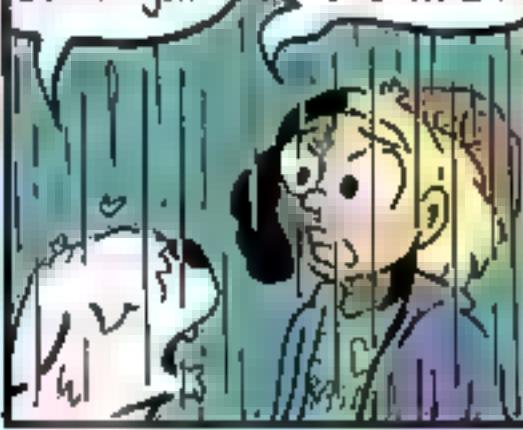


ERRTERRT
ERRTERRT
ERRTERRT



That's another quarter for the fire alarm jar.

C'mon, this time nothing's even on fire!



It's 10:09 P.M.



The National
Mall,
Washington, D. C.

I'm staring down a
deranged robotic lion.



There is a sniper on the
roof of the Smithsonian.

I can only do so much with
this uniform, but my
underwear is **superb.**



The situation
is under control.



This'll be a small squad mission. I'll lead a four-member team.

You need me to fly.

Obviously. We'll also be taking Tip.

Ugggh. Whyyy?

He has diplomatic skills and knows Dr. Jones well.

Fine, fine. Who's our #4?

Tip's wardrobe.

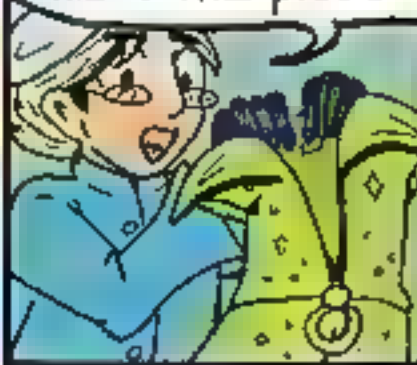
My steamer trunks have their own rider.



Oof... I've collected
learn to pack light,
the bare essentials.
Wilkin.



For example, this
vintage rhinestone
romper. You want
Tigerlily's approval,
this is the piece.



Or what if there's
a jungle adventure?
Voilà! And this
Pith helmet! Japanese
maid cosplay?



If you can't
picture a need
to go from
khaki to maid,
you have no
vision.



Would this
fit Gm?
Just
asking.
Shut up.



I'm gonna miss you, G.n.

I could tag along on the mission.



Annex One has other scientists on board now.



Hell yeah! Let **those** geniuses do the big-brain work.



Look! I put bows in Artie's hair!



It's cute because Sergio's doing it.

Never mind, all y'all's brains are broken.



Does Tip have a maid outfit he can loan?



Too far.

You want
Dr. Lee
on the
mission?

We can
use a
sciencey
person.

Uh... huh. If
I can leave my
girlfriend behind,
so can you.



No one's
bringing
the object
of their
affection!

Wilkin's
bringing
himself.

I know,
but he's
inseparable.

We
heard
that!



Give me
that!

My ingenious
weapon!



Too slow on the trigger.
You guys always drag
things out when you're
savoring an evil
plan.

I don't know
what you're-



I'm no genius, but I don't
stupid. You brought the
Tinsky subject here-
~~here~~, where he could
flip out at any minute,
surrounded by the
world's most dangerous
gadgets!



Oh?
Tell me
more.

More? Lady, I'm just
getting started! Do you know
how far this
violates the
union's safety
regs?

There is no one
on the side of
Evil this tactic
doesn't work on.





You
okay,
little
buddy?

Huh? Yes...
well... this
really isn't the
time for me
to... er...



Omigosh!
You've got a
crush on
the little
baldy man!

Argh...
Mell,
this isn't
easy
for me.



I'm not at ease with
these feelings in the
first place, and I have
to stop thinking about
Dr. Smith... I'm having
a lot of problems
here.



Your only
problem is
you get hot
for middle-
age cueball
nerds.

Slim, bronzed
Latin men,
actually...
there's just
something
about
linguistics.







After dinner, the two sat on the porch, looking at the stars.











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BY ANNE KATHRYN



AN ANNE KATHRYN STORY

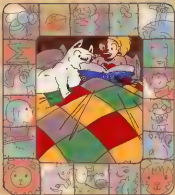
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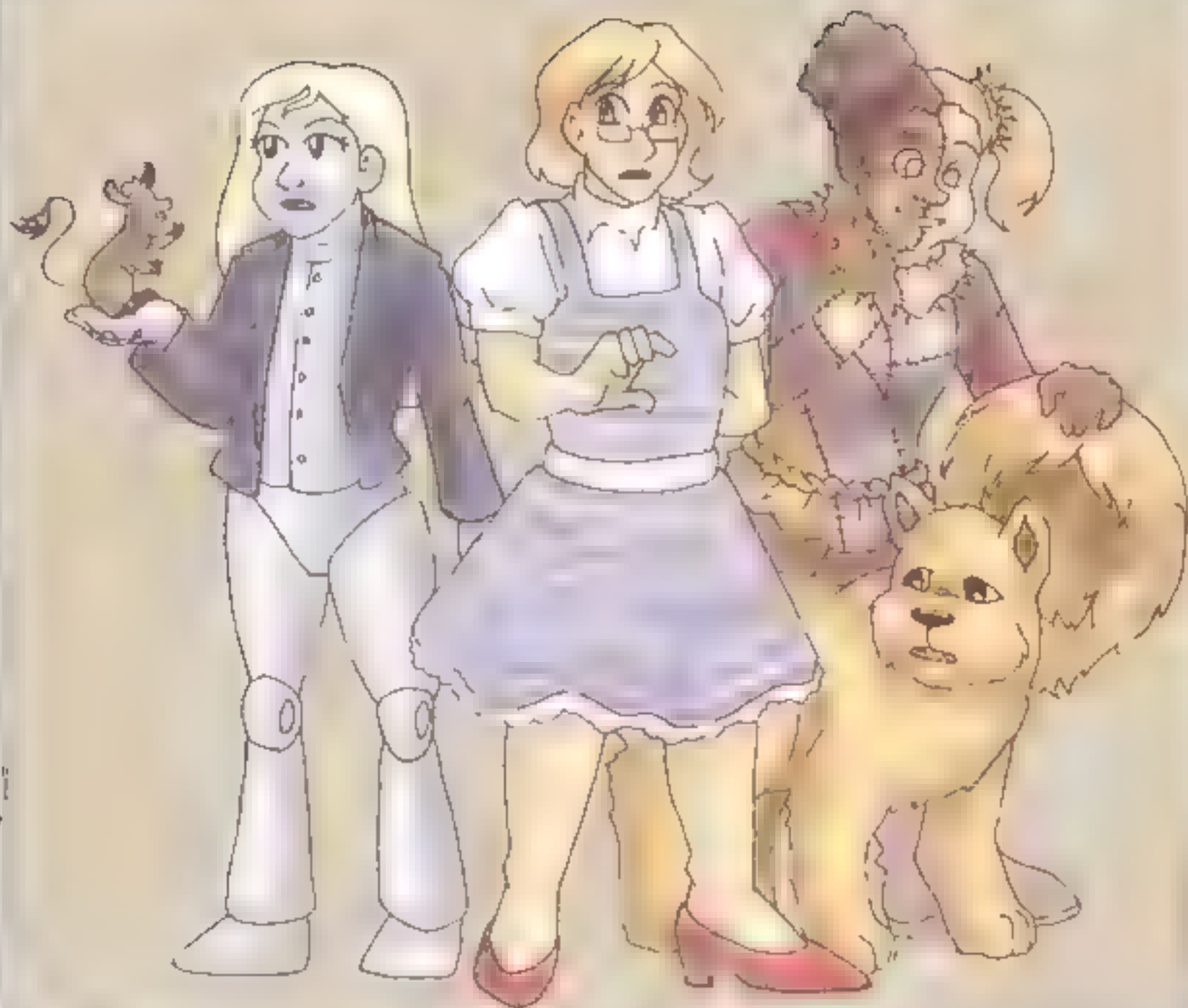
STANDARDS-BASED BOOK

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MARY MAE FLORES
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"YEAH. YEAH,
SAYING YOU WAS MY
winkieING JOY"

"I DON'T KNOW
IF GINGHAM IS
MY COLOR"

"LOOK. BABE
YOU CAN BE EVEN
FLUFFIER"

"AW, BUT
I WANTED TO
BE THE DOC..."

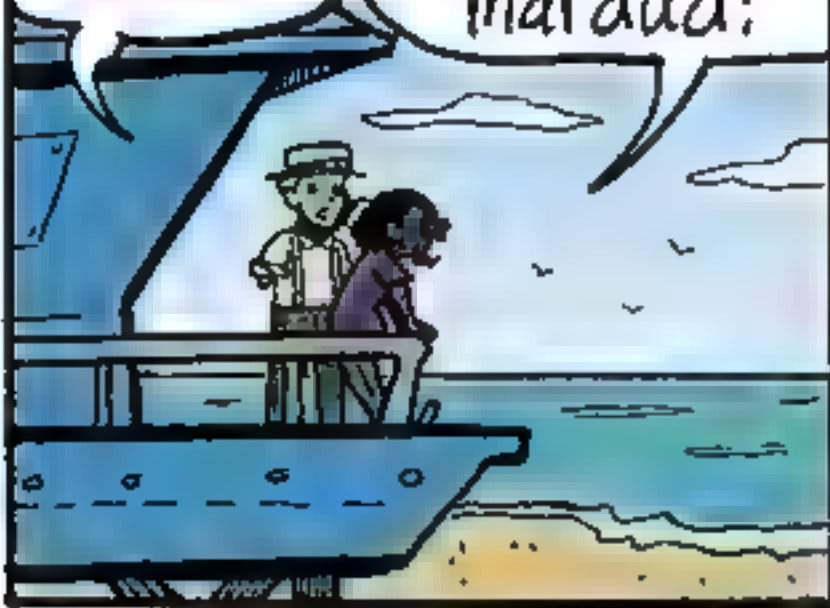






From this lifeguard tower, we can keep a lookout for the marauder.

Aw, but I wanna maraud!



I gotta stop these crimes.

Unless you know a magician, this is the best way.



Oh, hey, I **do** know a magician! Be right back, deadbros!



Sigh. I envy her youthful vigor.

I envy her spine.







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Illustration by Robert R. Taylor, 1910

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CRYSTAL SPRING WATER



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